

SWEET LOVE NEVER



SWEET LAVENDER

A DOMESTIC DRAMA

In Three Acts

BY ARTHUR W. PINERO

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

MDCCC.XCVII

A. W. Pinero's Plays

Price, 50 Cents Each

THE AMAZONS Farce in Three Acts. Seven males, five females. Costumes, modern; scenery, not difficult. Plays a full evening.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

“ SWEET LAVENDER ” must be regarded as one of the most successful stage-plays of modern times, and there can be no question that it has proved so far the most popular of Mr. Pinero’s works. Its representations may be counted by the thousand, and its popularity has extended over many latitudes. The reason of this is not far to seek ; it proclaims itself in the gentle humanity and genial humour of the play, and the lovable creation of the golden-hearted, weak-natured, down-at-heel Dick Phenyl. The very simplicity and unpretentiousness of this domestic comedy have apparently disarmed any antagonistic criticism which might have been expected from those critics of cynical temper and pessimistic mood who are wont to look for the stern realities of life even in the most purposely genial of theatrical entertainments. And if these, in view of the preponderance of kindly human nature in the play, elect to regard “ Sweet Lavender ” as a sort of modern fairy-tale rather than an actual and realistic study of life, certainly no one wou’d be more ready to agree with them

"The desire of fame betrays an ambitious man into indecencies that lessen his reputation; he is still afraid lest any of his actions should be thrown away in private."

ADDISON.

TERRY'S THEATRE,

105 & 106 STRAND.

SOLE LESSEE AND MANAGER, MR. EDWARD TERRY.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 1888,

FOR THE FIRST TIME,

An Original Domestic Drama, in Three Acts, entitled

SWEET LAVENDER,

BY

A. W. PINERO.

MR. GEOFFREY WEDDERBURN (of Wedderburn, Green & Hoskett, Bankers, Barnchester)	Mr. BRANDON THOMAS.
CLEMENT HALE (his adopted Son, studying for the Bar)	Mr. BERNARD GOULD.
DR. DELANEY (a fashionable Phy- sician)	Mr. ALFRED BISHOP.
DICK PHENYL (a Barrister)	Mr. EDWARD TERRY.
HORACE BREAM (a young American)	Mr. F. KERR.
MR. MAW (a Solicitor)	Mr. SANT MATTHEWS
MR. BULGER (Hairdresser and Wig- maker)	Mr. T. C. VALENTINE.
MRS. GILFILLIAN (a Widow—Mr. Wedderburn's Sister)	Miss M. A. VICTOR.
MINNIE (her Daughter)	Miss MAUDE MILLETT.
RUTH ROLT (Housekeeper and Laundress at 3 Brain Court, Temple)	Miss CARLOTTA ADDISON.
LAVENDER (her Daughter)	Miss NORREYS.

PR 5182

B6

1915

The Big Drum

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

PHILIP MACKWORTH.

SIR RANDLE FILSON, KNT.

BERTRAM FILSON, *his son.*

SIR TIMOTHY BARRADELL, BART.

ROBERT ROOPE.

COLLINGHAM GREEN.

LEONARD WESTRIP, *Sir Randle's secretary.*

ALFRED DUNNING, *of Sillitoe and Dunning's Private Detective Agency.*

NOYES, *Mr. Roope's servant.*

UNDERWOOD, *servant at Sir Randle's.*

JOHN, *Mr. Mackworth's servant.*

A WAITER.

OTTOLINE DE CHAUMIÈ, COMTESSE DE CHAUMIÈ, *née FILSON.*

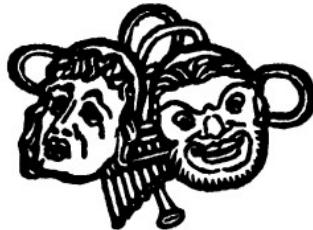
LADY FILSON.

HON. MRS. GODFREY ANSLOW.

MRS. WALTER QUEBEC.

MISS TRACER, *Lady Filson's secretary.*

PERIOD.—1913.



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Q. 1. 6. C. 1. 2. 3.

Mr. Pinero's play, and these tours lasted until November 5th, 1891, 697 performances having been given in the meanwhile. Since then other travelling companies have performed the play many hundred times all over the United Kingdom, and it finds a continuously appreciative public.

In America Mr. Pinero's famous comedy has become a stock piece, and its representations have been countless since Mr. Daniel Frohman first produced it at the Lyceum Theatre, New York. Australia has also taken very kindly to the play, which was first introduced to Antipodean audiences by Mr. Frank Thornton, and, during Mr. Edward Terry's recent visit to the colony, "Sweet Lavender" was naturally expected from him as its original producer, and it was received with enthusiasm at his hands. In South Africa it has also enjoyed frequent representation ; in the West Indies it has been much in favour ; and Mr. Thornton will shortly take the play to India.

But "Sweet Lavender," like "The Profligate" and "The Magistrate," has appealed beyond the English-speaking body of playgoers to those of the Teutonic and Italian tongues. It has been very frequently performed in Germany in an adaptation which eliminates the sentimental interest to a large extent and lays greater stress on the comic ; while the Italian stage knows it also by a version

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Sister)

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RUTH HOLT (Housekeeper and “Laundress” at
3 Brain Court Temple)

LAVENDER (her Daughter)

DICK PHENYL (a Barrister)

HORACE BREAM (a young American)

DR. DELANEY (a fashionable Physician)

MR. MAW (a Solicitor)

MR. BULGER (Hairdresser and Wigmaker)

But comedy of this order has a knack of cutting rather deeply, of ceasing, in some minds, to be comedy at all ; and it may be said that this is what has happened in the present instance. Luckily it is equally true that certain matters are less painful, because less actual, in print than upon the stage. The "wicked publisher," therefore, even when bombs are dropping round him, can afford to be more independent than the theatrical manager ; and for this reason I have not hesitated to ask my friend Mr. Heinemann to publish THE BIG DRUM in its original form.

ARTHUR PINERO.

LONDON,

September, 1915.

SWEET LAVENDER

THE FIRST ACT

The scene is the shabbily furnished sitting-room of some barristers' chambers at 3 Brain Court, Temple. On the spectator's left and right are the doors leading respectively to the bedrooms of RICHARD PHENYL and CLEMENT HALE. At the further end of the room, on the left, is a curtained opening leading into a passage, where a butler's tray stands, and facing the outer door of the chambers. The corresponding part of the room, where the windows look on to the Court, forms a kind of recess curtained off from the rest.

It is a bright spring morning.

RUTH ROLT, a slim, delicate-looking woman of about 35, with a sweet face and a sad soft voice, humbly but very neatly dressed, is laying the breakfast things upon the table.

BULGER, a meek bald-headed man, carrying a little old leather bag, a brass pot of hot water, and some clean towels, enters quietly.

BULGER.

I've give Mr. 'Ale a nice shave, Mrs. Rolt—clean

THE BIG DRUM

other high-backed settee fills the space between the windows, and in each window there is an armchair of the same period as the one at the fireplace.

The street is full of sunlight.

[*Note: Throughout, "right" and "left" are the spectator's right and left, not the actor's.*]

[ROBERT ROOPE, seated at the writing-table, is sealing a letter. NOYES enters at the door on the left, followed by PHILIP MACKWORTH.]

NOYES.

[Announcing PHILIP.] Mr. Mackworth.

ROOPE.

[*A simple-looking gentleman of fifty, scrupulously attired—jumping up and shaking hands warmly with PHILIP as the servant withdraws.*] My dear Phil !

PHILIP.

[*A negligently—almost shabbily—dressed man in his late thirties, with a handsome but worn face.*] My dear Robbie !

ROOPE.

A triumph, to have dragged you out! [*Looking at his watch.*] Luncheon isn't till a quarter-to-two. I asked you for half-past-one because I want to have a quiet little jaw with you beforehand.

PHILIP.

Delightful.

ROOPE.

Er—I'd better tell you at once, old chap, whom you'll meet here to-day.

RUTH.

I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Hale finds something to like, something to respect in Mr. Phenyl, with all his faults.

BULGER.

P'raps so. But to reflect that Mr. 'Ale used to be such a swell, as the sayin' goes, over in Pear Tree Court; and then, three weeks back, to come 'ere and take up with the untidiest chin in the Inner Temple—it's bewilderin'.

RUTH.

[*Impatiently.*] Oh ! [Walks up to the window, where she stands waiting for BULGER to go.]

BULGER.

[*With a sigh.*] Good mornin', Mrs. Rolt.

RUTH.

[*Without turning.*] Good morning.

[BULGER, on his way to the door, pauses, deposits his brass pot and towels on the table, then opens his bag mournfully.

RUTH.

[*Turning with surprise.*] Mr. Bulger !

BULGER.

I'm still 'oping, Mrs. Rolt.

RUTH.

It's good to be hoping for something in this world, Mr. Bulger.

ROOPE.

[*Ruefully.*] You don't grow a bit more reasonable, Phil; not a bit.

PHILIP.

I beg pardon. Go ahead.

ROOPE.

[*Sitting on the fauteuil-stool.*] Mrs. Godfrey Anslow and Mrs. Wally Quebec. Abuse them.

PHILIP.

Bless their innocent hearts! They'll be glad to meet Mr. Green.

ROOPE.

I trust so.

PHILIP.

[*Scowling.*] A couple of pushing, advertising women.

ROOPE.

Really —— !

PHILIP.

Ha, ha! Sorry. That's five, with you and me.

ROOPE.

That's five, as you justly observe. [*Clearing his throat.*] H'm! H'm!

PHILIP.

The sixth? I prepare myself for your great effect.

ROOPE.

[*With an effort.*] Er—Madame de Chaumie is in London, Phil.

BULGER.

[Surveying the paper doubtfully.] It ain't much good, but intellectually it's my all, ma'am. You won't?

RUTH.

No, Mr. Bulger, please.

BULGER.

[Putting away the paper and taking up his things.] Adjourned *sine die*, ma'am. [Turning solemnly.] I take leave for to mention that Mr. Justice Tyler's noo wig which I sent 'ome yesterday nips him at the nape o' the neck. Also that I cut Mr. Pritchett, the emment Q.C.'s chin, in his own chambers yesterday; a mole as I've skipped over these ten years like a gladsome child. I don't want to make a mountain out of a mole, Mrs. Rolt, but these facts denote the failin' 'and, ma'am. Good mornin'.

[As BULGER is going there is a knock at the outside door, which he opens, and admits Dr. DELANEY, a genial old Irish gentleman with silvery-grey hair and whiskers.]

DR. DELANEY.

Thank ye—I'm much obliged to ye. I'm calling on Mr. Hale. [BULGER goes out.] Is it Mrs. Rolt?

RUTH.

Yes, sir.

DR. DELANEY.

I'm Doctor Delaney. I've just had the pleasure of seeing your daughter downstairs in the kitchen—in the basement.

PHILIP.

You—you good-natured old meddler. [Quickly.] Does she expect to find me here?

ROOPE.

No.

PHILIP.

[*Making for the door on the left.*] I'll bolt, then.

ROOPE.

[*Rising and seizing him.*] You shall do nothing of the kind. [*Forcing him down upon the fauteuil-stool.*] You'll upset my luncheon-table! [*Tidying himself.*] You're most inconsiderate; you are positively. And you've disarranged my necktie.

PHILIP.

[*In a low voice.*] How is she looking, Robbie?

ROOPE.

Brilliant. [*Putting his necktie in order.*] Is that straight? Brilliant.

PHILIP.

[*Gazing into space.*] Ten years ago, old man!

ROOPE.

Quite.

PHILIP.

It was at her father and mother's, in Paris, that I made *your* acquaintance. Recollect?

ROOPE.

Perfectly; in the Avenue Montaigne. I had a flat in the Palais-Royal at the time.

CLEMENT.

[*In his room.*] Yes ?

RUTH.

Dr. Delaney, please.

CLEMENT.

[*Calling.*] Oh, thank you. I'm coming.

[*Ruth continues laying the table.*

DR. DELANEY.

[*To himself.*] It would be a great disappointment to Wedderburn the banker if the lad he's adopted did anything absurd. But, thank goodness, it's no business of mine.

RUTH.

Don't you think my girl is looking very pale, Doctor ?

DR. DELANEY.

Ah, don't worry yourself now. It's the air of the Temple. She's a white chrysanthemum instead of a pink one. Your daughter's strong enough.

RUTH.

Bless you for telling me that ! My sweet Lavender !

DR. DELANEY.

You're a little pale yourself now.

RUTH.

I—oh, I've had trouble.

ROOPE.

[*After a slight pause.*] Well, in spite of all this, I'm convinced she was genuinely attached to you, Phil—as fond of you as you were of her.

PHILIP.

[*Resting his head on his hands.*] Oh, shut up !

ROOPE.

Anyhow, here's an opportunity of testing it, dear excellent friend. She's been a widow twelve months ; you need have no delicacy on that score.

PHILIP.

[*Looking up.*] Why, do you suggest — ?

ROOPE.

Certainly ; and without delay. I hear there's a shoal of men after her, including Tim Barradell.

PHILIP.

[*With a grim smile.*] "Bacon" Barradell?

ROOPE.

[*Assentingly.*] They say Sir Timothy's in constant attendance.

PHILIP.

And what chance, do you imagine, would a poor literary cove stand against a real live baronet—and the largest bacon-curer in Ireland ?

ROOPE.

[*Rubbing his chin.*] You never know. Women are romantic creatures. She *might* prefer the author of those absorbing works of fiction whose pages often wrap up Tim Barradell's rashers.

DR. DELANEY.

Oh, has he? And she's very fond of her books—have ye noticed?

RUTH.

Yes, very.

DR. DELANEY.

Then the only thing I've got to recommend is this—that ye'll put a stop to the lessons for six months or so.

RUTH.

Very well, Doctor. Poor Lavvy!

DR. DELANEY.

[*To himself.*] I've hit it. Oh, thank goodness, this is no business of mine!

CLEMENT HALE enters. *He is a handsome boyish young man of about three and twenty, immaculately attired in a fashionable dressing-suit.*]

CLEMENT.

Dr. Delaney!

DR. DELANEY.

Mee dear boy!

CLEMENT.

They call you a fashionable physician, and you're found in the City at ten in the morning.

DR. DELANEY.

Mee dear boy, I'll let you into a secret—we can't get human ailments to keep fashionable hours.

ROOPE.

Tosh ! It's an advertising age.

PHILIP.

[*Stalking to the fireplace.*] It's a beastly vulgar age.

ROOPE.

It's the age I happen to live in, and I accommodate myself to it. [*Pacing the room as he warms to his theme.*] And if it's necessary for a private individual such as myself to advertise, as I maintain it is, how much more necessary is it for *you* to do so—a novelist, a poet, a would-be playwright, a man with something to sell ! Dash it, they've got to advertise soap, and soap's essential ! Why not literature, which *isn't* ? And yet you won't find the name of Mr. Philip Mackworth in the papers from one year's end to another, except in a scrubby criticism now and again.

PHILIP.

[*Calmly.*] Excuse me, there are the publishers' announcements.

ROOPE.

Publishers' announcements ! I'm not speaking of the *regular* advertising columns. What I want to see are paragraphs concerning you mixed up with the news of the day, information about you and your habits, interviews with you, letters from you on every conceivable topic —

PHILIP.

[*Grinning.*] Do you !

ROOPE.

[*Joining PHILIP.*] Oh, my dear Phil, I entreat you, feed the papers ! It isn't as if you hadn't talent ; you

gracious ! Here's poor Wedderburn travelling abroad in happy ignorance, and it's nobody's business to look after the boy he loves like a son. Well, it's not *my* business at any rate. [*There is the sudden sound of the fall of some heavy object in the adjacent room.*] What's that now ?

CLEMENT.

That ? Oh, that's Dick.

DR. DELANEY.

Dick, is it ?

CLEMENT.

Mr. Richard Phenyl, barrister-at-law. I share his chambers. Dick's dressing.

DR. DELANEY.

Dropped his waistcoat.

CLEMENT.

Poor Dick ! If you saw him I dare say you'd be shocked at my making a companion of a man like Dick Phenyl.

DR. DELANEY.

Dear me !

CLEMENT.

But I know what good there is in old Dick, and how the good burns clearer and brighter in his slovenly person than in many who've had luck and love and luxury in their lives--which Dick hasn't. I shall pull him round yet. Like to know him ?

PHILIP.

[*Standing near ROOPE.*] I have no dislike for publicity —for fame. By George, sir, I covet it, if I can win it honestly and decently !

ROOPE.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Ah —— !

PHILIP.

And I humble myself before the men and women of my craft—and they are many—who succeed in winning it in that fashion, or who are content to remain obscure. But for the rest—the hustlers of the pen, the seekers after mere blatant applause, the pickers-up of cheap popularity—I've a profound contempt for them and their methods.

ROOPE.

You can't deny the ability of some of 'em.

PHILIP.

Deny it ! Of course I don't deny it. But no amount of ability, of genius if you will, absolves the follower of any art from the obligation of conducting himself as a modest gentleman —

ROOPE.

Ah, there's where you're so hopelessly Victorian and out o' date !

PHILIP.

Well, that's my creed ; and, whether I've talent or not, I'd rather snuff out, when my time comes, neglected and a pauper than go back on it. [*Walking away and pacing the room.*] Oh, but I'm not discouraged, my dear Robbie—not a scrap ! I'm not discouraged, though you do regard me as a dismal failure.

DICK.

Clemen', my boy, you're so unreasonable. I had an imporant appointment at the "Steak and Turbot," in Flee' Street—a very old-established inn, Clemen'—Doc'or Johnson and all that sor' o' thing. I'm none the worse for it, Clemen'.

CLEMENT.

Are you any the better?

DICK.

I'm about the same, Clemen'.

CLEMENT.

Let me introduce my friend, Doctor Delaney.

DICK.

Wha' nonsense—Doc'or Johnson.

CLEMENT.

Doctor *Delaney*.

DICK.

[*To DELANEY.*] I beg your par'on—I didn't perceive you when I firs' came in.

[He walks rather unsteadily to DELANEY, shakes hands with him, then sits on the sofa.]

DR. DELANEY.

Delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Phenyl.

DICK.

Than'g you. Were you here when you heard that noise in nex' room?

ROOPE.

[*Thoughtfully.*] C-c-capital !

PHILIP.

Titterton, my new publisher, is tremendously taken with the scheme of the thing—keen as mustard about it.

ROOPE.

Er—pardon me, Phil —

PHILIP.

Eh ?

ROOPE.

[*Fingering the lapel of PHILIP's coat.*] I say, old man, you wouldn't be guilty of the deplorably bad taste of putting me into it, would you ?

PHILIP.

[*Slapping him on the back.*] Ha, ha ! My dear Robbie, half the polite world is in it. Don't tell me you wish to be left out in the cold !

ROOPE.

[*Thoroughly alarmed.*] Dear excellent friend — !

[NOYES enters again at the door on the left, preceding COLLINGHAM GREEN.]

NOYES.

[*Announcing GREEN, and then retiring.*] Mr. Collingham Green.

GREEN.

[*A gaily-dressed, genial soul, with a flower in his buttonhole, a monocle, a waxed moustache, and a skilful arrangement of a sparse head of hair—shaking hands with ROOPE.*] How are you, my deah fellow ?

CLEMENT.

[Offering a carafe of water.] Water?

DICK.

[Quickly.] Ver' little!

[DELANEY pours some water into the tumbler,
then gives it to DICK.

DR. DELANEY.

Swallow that, now.

DICK.

Not spirits, I hope—at this hour o' the mor'ning?

DR. DELANEY.

No, no.

DICK.

[Annoyed.] Why not?

DR. DELANEY.

That's a blessed antidote to the vilest poison the devil ever put his red seal on—I allude to Scotch whiskey, not Irish.

DICK.

Wha' nonsense—blessed anecdote.

DR. DELANEY.

Come, come, drink my health, sor.

DICK.

[Thickly.] "The Queen!"

[DICK drinks the contents of the tumbler, then coughs and splutters.

ROOPE.

Half-past-seven !

GREEN.

Though I wasn't in bed till two this morning. At eight I had a cup of coffee and a piece of dry toast, and skimmed the papers. From eight-thirty till ten I dictated a special article on our modern English hostesses—"The Hostesses of England : Is Hospitality Declining?" a question I answer in the negative —

ROOPE.

[*In a murmur.*] Quite right.

GREEN.

At ten o'clock, a man from Clapp and Beazley's with some patterns of socks and underwear. Disposed of *him*, dressed, and by a quarter-to-eleven I was in the Park. Strolled up and down with Lady Ventnor and Sir Hill Birch and saw everybody there was to be seen. I nevah make a single note ; my memory's marvellous. Left the Park at twelve and took a taxi to inquire after Lord Harrogate, Charlie Sievwright, and old Lady Dorcas Newnham. I'm not boring you ?

ROOPE.

Boring us !

GREEN.

Lady Dorcas caught sight of me from her window and hailed me in. I sat with her for twenty minutes—"Greenie" she always calls me—[mimicking] "Now, Greenie, what's the noos?" Haw, haw, haw ! I walked away from Lady Dorcas's, and was in upper Grosvenor Street punctually at one. [To ROOPE.] There's been a meeting at the Baroness Van der Meer's to-day, you know, over this fête at the Albert Hall.

DR. DELANEY.

Ah, why not? Some of us so-called fashionable physicians have made so much money out of those who haven't anything the matter with 'em that its hard if we can't do a little for the benefit of those who have.

CLEMENT.

But why "The Home of Forgetfulness?"

DR. DELANEY.

Because its only by a bed of sickness that many a woman can forget the trouble and pain and disappointment this wurld has brought her. [Taking CLEMENT's hand.] God bless ye, mee boy.

CLEMENT.

God bless *you*, Doctor Delaney? I wish more of us were like you.

DR. DELANEY.

Go along, now. Good-bye. [Looking at CLEMENT, then at DICK.] Ah, its no business of mine.

[*He bustles out, brushing past RUTH, who has been listening.*

RUTH.

[*Under her breath to DELANEY as he passes her.*] Doctor!

[*He passes through the passage. She following him.*

CLEMENT.

[*Calling after DELANEY.*] Good bye!

NOYES.

Mrs. Walter Quebec.

[MRS. WALTER QUEBEC enters and NOYES withdraws.]

ROOPE.

[*Taking MRS. QUEBEC's hand.*] My dear Mrs. Wally, how are you?

MRS. QUEBEC.

[*A bright, energetic, fairly young lady.*] How'r you, Robbie? Walter is so grieved; he's lunching at the Auto with Tony Baxter. He did try to wriggle out of it—[*Discovering GREEN and going to him with her hand extended.*] Oh, I am glad! You're just the man I'm dying to see.

GREEN.

[*Kissing her hand.*] Haw — !

MRS. QUEBEC.

Lady Skewes and I are getting up a concert in aid of the poor sufferers from the earthquake in—what's the name of the place?—I forget—Lady Skewes knows it—and we want you to say a lot about us in your darling paper. Only distinguished amateurs; that's where the novelty comes in. Lady Skewes is going to play the violin, if she can pull herself together—she hasn't played for centuries—[*seeing PHILIP, advancing, and shaking hands with him casually*] how d'ye do?—[to GREEN] and I've promised to sing.

GREEN.

Splendid.

ROOPE.

But how captivating!

CLEMENT.

Certainly. [CLEMENT tosses a coin and catches it on the back of his hand, covering it.] Call ! ,

[DICK throws his coin in the air—it falls many yards away from him, but covers the back of his hand as if he had caught the coin. CLEMENT laughs.

DICK.

[Uncorering his hand, disappointed.] Oh, never mind—woman !

CLEMENT.

Yours.

[DICK sits in the armchair. CLEMENT helps DICK to sweetbread, then pours out tea.

CLEMENT.

No appetite, I suppose ?

DICK.

[As if with a disagreeable taste in his mouth.] H'm ! I fancy my liver isn't as it should be.

CLEMENT.

Ah ! Dick, Dick, you've broken your word to me again.

DICK.

[Cheerfully.] The last time, Clement, my boy—the last time.

MRS. ANSLOW.

[*Going to GREEN and giving him her hand.*] Oh, and here's that horrid Mr. Green !

GREEN.

My deah Mrs. Anslow !

MRS. QUEBEC.

Horrid ! What's he done ? [*Sitting in the chair by the small table.*] I consider him a white-robed angel.

MRS. ANSLOW.

I sent him a long account of my accident at Roehampton and he hasn't condescended to take the slightest notice of it.

MRS. QUEBEC.

Oh, Mr. Green !

MRS. ANSLOW.

[*To GREEN.*] It's cruel of you.

GREEN.

[*To MRS. ANSLOW, twiddling his moustache.*] Alack and alas, deah lady, motor collisions are not quite in my line !

MRS. ANSLOW.

You might have passed it on to the accident man. Or you could have said that I'm to be seen riding in the Row evidently none the worse for my recent shock. That's in your line.

GREEN.

Haw ! I might have done that, certainly. [*Tapping his brow.*] Fact is—height of the Season—perfectly distracted —

CLEMENT.

Dick, Delaney says that little Lavender Rolt ought to discontinue her studies.

DICK.

Oh !

CLEMENT.

[*Leaving the table.*] Confound it ! When she is making such progress.

[CLEMENT sits with his elbows on the writing-table and his head resting on his hand.]

DICK.

Hallo, Clement, my boy ! [Going over to CLEMENT sympathetically.] This won't do.

CLEMENT.

What won't do ?

DICK.

Clem, no man is quite so sober as the individual who is occasionally otherwise. All his acuteness is concentrated upon his brief lucid intervals, and in those intervals his acuteness is—devilish. [Laying his hand on CLEMENT's shoulder.] Clement !

CLEMENT.

Dick !

DICK.

When you took compassion upon a worthless, broken-down reprobate—I allude to the gentleman now honoured with the attention of the House—you did a fine thing ; but don't spoil it, Clement, my boy !

PHILIP.

[*Glaring at ROOPE.*] Tsssh !

ROOPE.

[*To MRS. ANSLOW.*] Get his books from your library instantly. I envy you the treat in store for you —

[NOYES again appears.]

NOYES.

Madame de Chaumié.

[OTTOLINE DE CHAUMIÉ enters—a beautiful, pale, elegant young woman of three-and-thirty, with a slightly foreign air and perfect refinement of manner. NOYES retires. Everybody is manifestly pleased to see OTTOLINE, except PHILIP who picks up a little figure from the writing-table and examines it critically.]

ROOPE.

[*Hurrying to her and taking her hand.*] Ah — !

OTTOLINE.

Robbie dear !

MRS. QUEBEC.

[*Going to OTTOLINE.*] Oh ! [They embrace.] This is lovely !

OTTOLINE.

[*To MRS. ANSLOW, who comes to her.*] Millicent — ! [*To GREEN, who bustles forward and kisses her hand.*] How do you do ?

MRS. QUEBEC.

[*To OTTOLINE.*] You didn't stay long at the Railtons' last night, Ottoline.

DICK.

Thank you, Clem. Lavy must be sent into the country for the benefit of her health, and then--there'll be an end of it.

CLEMENT.

Dick ! Why should there be an end of it ?

DICK.

Don't talk to me, sir, like that ! Haven't you been adopted by a Mr. What's-his-name, a banker, sir ?

CLEMENT.

Well ?

DICK.

If a banker would adopt *me*, you'd see something like behaviour, sir. Why, if you offend your father, as you call him, you'll be a pauper ; you'll be like Richard Phenyl, Esq., of the Inner Temple !

CLEMENT.

Why should I offend Mr. Wedderburn by loving a girl who is simple and honest and generous and courtly ; whose only vice is that she is not dressed by a Bond Street milliner ?

DICK.

Don't come to me when you're starving, that's all.

CLEMENT.

Nonsense, Dick. At the worst I shall have my profession.

PHILIP.

[*Gently, but without exceeding the bounds of mere courtesy.*] Robbie excels in surprises; he has been almost equally reserved with me. Are you very well?

OTTOLINE.

Very. And you?

PHILIP.

Very. And Sir Randle and Lady Filson?

OTTOLINE.

Quite well—and my brother Bertram. [*Chilled.*] Perhaps you've heard that I am making my home with them now in London, permanently—that I've left Paris?

PHILIP.

Robbie—and the newspapers—have told me. It's late in the day to do it—may I offer you my sympathy?

OTTOLINE.

[*With a stately inclination of the head.*] Thank you. And I my congratulations on your success?

PHILIP.

[*Quietly.*] Success.

OTTOLINE.

[*Comprehending.*] Ah? *Le public est si bête.* I've read every line you've written, I believe. [He bows.] I—I have felt proud to think that we were once—that we were once—not *des inconnus*.

[He bows again, and there is silence between them. The dining-room door opens and NOYES presents himself. A waiter is seen in the dining-room, standing at the side table.]

the pair of bays from Tattersall's, at the young gentleman's order. The girl was pretty and good, and he loved her, Clement, but the time arrived when the slippers wore down at the heel and had to be replaced by a size larger. And, by and bye— it's a sad story—he noticed that her little sharp elbows didn't get whiter, poor thing ! and that she mixed up the first and third person in accepting Lady Montmorency's kind invitation to dine. And one day a carriage and pair were for sale, Clement—as good as new—the property of a gentleman leaving England, who was no longer answerable for the debts contracted by Cinderella, his wife.

CLEMENT.

The hero of your story was a cad, Dick !

DICK.

The hero of any story generally is. There— take my sermon or leave it. But it's because I love you, and because this poor weman, Ruth Rolt, has been for fifteen years a good friend to a shaggy worthless cur, that I won't let you and her child make each other wretched without raising my bark against it. Amen, Clement, my boy— Amen !

[He drops into the armchair facing the fire and lights his pipe. There is a low knock from the other side of the curtained opening.]

CLEMENT.

There's that man of mine, Jenks—he gets later and later every morning.

MRS. QUEBEC.

Thanks ; Millicent's taking me along with her to the Horse Show.

MRS. ANSLOW.

[*Shaking hands with PHILIP.*] Very pleased to meet you again. Ever see anything now of the Fairfields?

PHILIP.

Never.

MRS. ANSLOW.

No loss. I believe dear old Eustace is off his head.

PHILIP.

Possibly.

MRS. ANSLOW.

[*Tolerantly.*] But then, so many people are off their heads, aren't they ?

PHILIP.

A great many.

MRS. ANSLOW.

[*Bestowing a parting nod upon PHILIP and crossing to the open door.*] Sha'n't wait, Esmé. It's a month's journey to Hammersmith in the ark.

MRS. QUEBEC.

[*Kissing OTTOLINE.*] Good-bye.

MRS. ANSLOW.

[*To ROOPE.*] Charming lunch. Enjoyed myself enormously.

MRS. QUEBEC.

[*Shaking hands with PHILIP hastily.*] Good-bye, Mr. Mackworth.

DICK.

[*Reading.*] "I am not coming any more has I can't stand the carryings on of that awful Mr. Phenyl." [*Indignantly.*] Well—I—

[*He screws up the note vindictively and throws it into the fire; then turning, he sees LAVENDER and CLEMENT close together.*

LAVENDER.

[*Giving the books to CLEMENT, reluctantly.*] You won't look at my exercise till I've cleared the breakfast table and gone right out of sight, will you?

CLEMENT.

Why?

LAVENDER.

It's so blotty.

DICK.

[*Fidgeting.*] H'm! Clement, my boy! [*Admonishing CLEMENT by waving his pipe.*]

[*LAVENDER goes to the breakfast table and begins removing the things.*

CLEMENT.

[*Angrily.*] Don't interfere, Dick.

DICK.

Thank you, Mr. Hale. [*Stalking away indignantly.*

CLEMENT.

[*To himself.*] Confound Dick's cynicism. How

OTTOLINE.

Philip —— !

[*Just as swiftly, they separate; and a moment afterwards ROOPE returns, rubbing his hands cheerily.*]

ROOPE.

[*Advancing, but not shutting the door.*] There ! Now we're by ourselves ! [To OTTOLINE.] You're not running away ?

OTTOLINE.

[*Confused.*] Oh, I—I ——

ROOPE.

It's only half-past-three. Why don't you and Mackworth sit down and have a little talk together ? [To PHILIP, who has strolled to the further window and is looking into the street.] You're in no hurry, Phil ?

PHILIP.

Not in the least.

ROOPE.

[*Crossing to the writing-table.*] I'll finish answering my letters ; I sha'n't have a moment later on. [Gathering up his correspondence.] You won't disturb me ; I'll polish 'em off in another room. [To OTTOLINE.] Are you goin' to Lady Paulton's by-and-by, by any chance ?

OTTOLINE.

[*Again at the fireplace, her back to ROOPE and PHILIP.*] And Mrs. Jack Cathcart's—and Mrs. Le Roy's ——

ROOPE.

You shall take me to Lowndes Square, if you will. [Recrossing.] Sha'n't be more than ten minutes. [At the door.] Ten minutes, dear excellent friends. A quarter-of-an-hour at the outside.

CLEMENT.

Pounds, shillings, and pence are to be withdrawn from your mental banking account ; the intricate verb will torture you no longer ; and the mountains of this world will have to settle their relative height amongst themselves.

LAVENDER.

[*Falteringly.*] I was afraid I was becoming too troublesome to you, Mr. Hale.

CLEMENT.

My dear child, it's not my doing, but Doctor Delaney's.

LAVENDER.

Oh, how cruel ! He doesn't know how ignorant and stupid I am !

[*She returns to the passage in tears.*

CLEMENT.

[*Savagely to DICK.*] There !

DICK.

Think of your health, Lavvy. Health should be the first consideration with us all.

[*LAVENDER returns, wiping her eyes, to brush away the crumbs.*

CLEMENT.

But I've a capital notion. If you may not *read*, there's nothing to prevent your being *read to*.

tunities of meeting you occasionally on a crowded staircase or in a hot supper-room. But—as for anything else —

OTTOLINE.

[Slowly withdrawing her hands and putting them behind her.] As for—anything else —?

PHILIP.

I repeat—*cui bono?* [Regarding her kindly but penetratingly.] What would be the result of your reviving a friendship with an ill-tempered, intolerant person who would be just as capable to-morrow of turning upon you like a savage —?

OTTOLINE.

Ah, you are still angry with me! [With a change of tone.] As you did that evening, for instance, when I came with Nannette to your shabby little den in the Rue Soufflot —

PHILIP.

Precisely.

OTTOLINE.

[Walking away to the front of the fauteuil-stool.] To beg you to *prôner* my father and mother in the journal you were writing for—what was the name of it? —

PHILIP.

[Following her.] *The Whitehall Gazette.*

OTTOLINE.

And you were polite enough to tell me that my cravings and ideals were low, pitiful, ignoble!

PHILIP.

[Regretfully.] You remember?

[CLEMENT folds the cloth angrily with DICK.
LAVENDER opens the door and admits
HORACE BREAM, a good-looking, well-
dressed fair-haired young American.

HORACE.

[At the door.] Thank you—Mr. Hale? Thank you.
[Advancing and looking from CLEMENT to DICK.] You'll excuse me, I hope, but being rather in a hurry
—[to DICK]—Hale?

DICK.

[Dropping his end of the tablecloth.] No—Phenyl!

HORACE.

[To CLEMENT.] Mr. Hale, I am perfectly delighted to make your acquaintance. Permit me to carry this through with you.

[Placing his hat and stick on the floor, he picks up the end of the tablecloth and folds it with CLEMENT, who glares at him in annoyance. DICK sits on the sofa, chuckling. LAVENDER is seen from time to time in the passage taking away the breakfast things.

CLEMENT.

Really, I haven't the pleasure of——

HORACE

Horace Pinkley Bream.

CLEMENT.

Well, but——

PHILIP.

Pique?

OTTOLINE.

Within a few hours of that fatal visit of mine to your lodgings. [Looking at him significantly.] It was *that* that drove me to it.

PHILIP.

[Staring at her.] That——!

OTTOLINE.

[Simply.] Yes, Phil.

PHILIP.

Otto!

OTTOLINE.

[Plucking at the arm of her chair.] You see—you see, notwithstanding the vulgarity of my mind, I had a deep respect for you. Even then there were wholesome signs in me! [Shrugging her shoulders plaintively.] Whether I should have ended by obeying my better instincts, and accepting you, I can't say. I believe I should. I—I believe I should. At any rate, I had already begun to chafe under the consciousness that, while you loved me, you had no esteem for me.

PHILIP.

[Remorsefully.] My dear!

OTTOLINE.

[Raising her head.] That scene between us in the Rue Soufflot set my blood on fire. To have a request refused me was sufficiently mortifying; but to be whipped, scourged, scarified, into the bargain——! I flew down your stairs after I left you, and drove home,

CLEMENT.

[*To himself.*] An intrusive *table d'hôte* acquaintance.
 [To HORACE.] You left my friends at Nice, I presume?

HORACE.

No, sir ; we are home.

CLEMENT.

Home !

HORACE.

I brought Mrs. Gilfillian and her daughter right through to London yesterday. Charming ladies.

DICK.

[*To himself.*] Hallo !

CLEMENT.

[*Under his breath.*] Confound it !

HORACE.

We left Wedderburn in Paris, buying things. An exceedingly pleasant gentleman.

CLEMENT.

[*Distractedly.*] And where are Mrs. Gilfillian and her daughter now ?

HORACE.

That's my difficulty—where ? I lost 'em at Charing Cross station last night. Having heard them frequently talk about you, I dug up your old apartments in Pear Tree Court, where I found your notice of removal. You have not seen Mrs. Gilfillian yet ?

OTTOLINE.

But the women were either hopelessly *bourgeoises* or slightly *déclassée*. [Inspecting some of the pieces of bric-à-brac upon the table.] Which decided us to attack London —and induced me to pay my call on you in the Rue Soufflot —

PHILIP.

I understand.

OTTOLINE.

To coax you to herald us in your weekly *causeries*. [Wincing.] Horrible of me, that was; horrible, horrible, horrible ! [Replacing an object upon the table and moving to the other side of the room.] However, I wasn't destined to share the earliest of the London triumphs. [Bitterly.] Mine awaited me in Paris, and at Vaudemont-Baudricourt, as the Comtesse de Chaumié ! [Shivering.] Ugh-h-h-h — !

[She is about to sit in the chair on the left when he comes to her impulsively and restrains her.

PHILIP.

My poor girl — !

OTTOLINE.

[With abandon.] Ah — !

PHILIP.

My poor dear girl !

OTTOLINE.

It's a relief to me to open my heart to you, Philip. [He leads her to the fauteuil-stool.] Robbie won't interrupt us yet awhile, will he ?

DICK.

I don't like your look, Clem. What are you going to do?

CLEMENT.

Do, Dick! I am going out to buy "Frederick the Great," by Carlyle.

[*He goes into his bedroom. LAVENDER appears in the passage.*]

DICK.

[*Calling after CLEMENT.*] Leave my chambers today! I've done with you! [To himself.] If Ruth could only afford to send little Lavvy away for the benefit of her health, what a solution it would be. I think I could contrive it if I had a few pounds to spare. But if I had a few pounds to spare, I couldn't spare 'em. Lavender! [*LAVENDER takes the folded table-cloth from the table and puts it away in the sideboard.*] [Thinking.] Cripps has a fellow reading with him who wants to buy a little library. [Looking towards the bookshelves.] There's my little library; the last remainder of the time when — If Cripps's pupil is good for fifteen pounds, I'll lend 'em to Ruth Rolt, and Lavvy shall leave town. [Eyeing LAVENDER.] Brighton into fifteen quid won't go. Broadstairs into fifteen quid, four weeks and one day over. [Shaking his fist at the books.] Come on! [Taking down the books, savagely.] I'll teach you to remind me of the time when I was a promising lad like Cripps's pupil!

LAVENDER.

[*Watching him in surprise.*] May I help you, Mr. Phenyl?

PHILIP.

[*Gently.*] Forgive me.

OTTOLINE.

It's been none of my doing ; I've finished with *le snobisme* entirely. [*Pleadingly.*] You don't doubt me ?

PHILIP.

[*Putting her hand.*] No—no.

OTTOLINE.

Nowadays I detest coming across my name in print. But my people—[*with a little moue*] they will persist in — !

PHILIP.

Beating the big drum ?

OTTOLINE.

Ha ! [*Brushing her hair from her brow fretfully.*] Oh ! Oh, Phil, it was blindness on my part to return to them—sheer blindness !

PHILIP.

Blindness ?

OTTOLINE.

They've been urging me to do it ever since my husband's death ; so I had ample time to consider the step. But I didn't realize, till I'd settled down in Ennismore Gardens, how thoroughly I —

PHILIP.

[*Finding she doesn't continue.*] How thoroughly — ?

OTTOLINE.

How thoroughly I've grown away from them—ceased to be one of them. [*Stamping her foot.*] Oh, I know I'm

DICK.

Seaside, then ?

LAVENDER.

No, we have a river with boats on it.

DICK.

Pooh, Lavvy ! Think of fresh air, fresh eggs, fresh milk from the cow. We are all apt to underrate the importance of milk from the cow.

LAVENDER.

No. I'm happy here—so happy !

DICK.

[*To himself:*] Thinking of him !—Thinking of him !

LAVENDER.

Why do you look at the title-pages ?

DICK.

I'm sorting my property from the other young gentleman's, Mr. Hale's.

LAVENDER.

[*Eagerly.*] Oh, let me do it ! I'll look for Mr. Hale's name ! I'll take care you don't sell any of his. May I ?

DICK.

Very well, Lavvy.

[*She takes a quantity of books from the shelves, places them on the ground and kneels amongst them.*

OTTOLINE.

To alter the whole current of my life, if it's possible,
 [sinking into the chair] and to breathe some fresh air!
 [Fanning herself with her hand.] Phew-w-w-w!

PHILIP.

H'm! [Approaching her and looking down upon her.] According to report, Ottoline, you'd have very little difficulty in—escaping.

OTTOLINE.

[Glancing up at him.] Report?

PHILIP.

Rumor has it that there are at least a dozen ardent admirers at your feet, each with a wedding-ring in his waistcoat-pocket.

OTTOLINE.

[Reproachfully, her eyes meeting his.] Why, have you been listening to tittle-tattle as well as studying newspaper paragraphs! [He bows, good-humoredly.] My dear Philip, allowing for exaggeration, granting that my *soupirants* number *half* a dozen, which of them would enable me to fill my lungs with fresh air? Who are they, these enterprising men —?

PHILIP.

[Leaving her abruptly and going to the mantelpiece.] Oh, pray don't ask me! I don't know who the fellows are—except—they say—Sir Timothy Barradell —

OTTOLINE.

[Lightly but softly.] Sir Timothy! Sir Timothy has only just succeeded in fighting his way into the world I'm sick and tired of! [Shaking her head.] Poor Sir Tim! [Pityingly.] Ha, ha, ha, ha!

[CLEMENT goes to DICK's door, listens, and then quietly turns the key.

LAVENDER.

[With another book.] "Williams on the Law of Real Property." Clement Hale. Ah! [She opens the middle of the book.] "Incorporeal Herediments." What a beautiful book!

[She settles herself a little nearer the window and reads earnestly. CLEMENT comes and sits upon the pile of books beside her.

CLEMENT.

[Softly.] Lavender.

[With a low cry of fright she turns slowly and looks at him.

LAVENDER.

What are you doing there, Mr. Hale?

CLEMENT.

I've come to sit with you in the garden.

LAVENDER.

The garden!

[Staring at him, she tries to rise; he stretches out his hand and takes hers.

LAVENDER.

[Under her breath.] Mr. Hale!

PHILIP.

[*Partly in jest, partly seriously.*] Do the buds still sprout on those trees in the Allée de Longchamp and the Champs-Elysées, can you tell me?

OTTOLINE.

[*Falling in with his humor.*] Ha, ha! Every spring, *cher ami*, regularly.

PHILIP.

And the milk at the Café d'Armenonville and the Pré-Catelan—is it still rich and delectable?

OTTOLINE

To the young, I assume; scarcely to the aged widow —!

PHILIP.

Or the grey-haired scribbler! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

OTTOLINE.

Ha, ha, ha, ha —!

[*He turns and advances to her slowly, looking at her fixedly and earnestly.*

PHILIP.

Ottoline—I wonder whether you'd care to walk under those trees with me again, for sentiment's sake, some fine day in the future —!

OTTOLINE.

[*Staring at him.*] C-care —?

PHILIP.

And if you would, whether I ought to tempt you to risk it!

you're accustomed to being my wife, they'll grow quite white.

LAVENDER.

But look at me—my frocks can't keep secrets if I can ; I'm very poor.

CLEMENT.

I'll be poor with you, if it comes to that.

LAVENDER.

[*Looking up into his face.*] Are you poor ?

CLEMENT.

I've nothing—of my own—but my profession.
[*Thoughtfully.*] I may become very poor.

LAVENDER.

[*Rising quickly.*] Oh !

CLEMENT.

[*Retreating a little.*] Do you like me less for that ?

LAVENDER.

[*Going towards him.*] Less ! [*Checking herself.*] I—I haven't said I like you at all, but if I ever did like you, it would be because I know *how* to be poor, and could teach you the way to bear it.

CLEMENT.

[*Drawing her to him.*] My sweet, sweet Lavender !

PHILIP.

[Pressing her to him.] Ah! Too late for neither of us.
It's a bargain?

OTTOLINE.

Yes—yes; but ——

PHILIP.

But —— ?

OTTOLINE.

[Her head drooping.] Must it be—*some* day? [Pitously.] Some day!

PHILIP.

There are signs in the sky; the day isn't far distant!

OTTOLINE.

I—I've money, Philip ——

PHILIP.

H'sssh! [Frowning.] Ottoline!

OTTOLINE.

Ah, je vois que votre orgueil est plus fort que votre amour!

PHILIP.

Ha, ha! Peut-être; je ne m'en défends pas. You consent?

OTTOLINE.

[Pouting.] I may let my people know of the arrangement, may I not? You'll see them?

PHILIP.

My dear, what would be gained by that *now*?

CLEMENT.

Never.

LAVENDER.

[*Happily.*] Ah!

CLEMENT.

Tell me again you love me.

LAVENDER.

I never will. You make me say things and then you laugh at me. [*Bending her head to his.*] I love you.

The curtain over the doorway is pushed aside, and MRS. GILFILLIAN enters followed by MINNIE. MRS. GILFILLIAN is a sedate aristocratic-looking woman about fifty, with a lofty forehead and sidecurls. MINNIE is a handsome, lively young woman. Both are fashionably dressed. On discovering CLEMENT at LAVENDER's feet MRS. GILFILLIAN clutches MINNIE by the arm, and takes her out; CLEMENT and LAVENDER, with their heads close together, being unconscious of interruption. There is then a loud rat-tat-tat at the outer door. CLEMENT and LAVENDER rise quickly, she dropping among the books, while he goes and draws the curtain and discovers MRS. GILFILLIAN and MINNIE.

CLEMENT.

My dear aunt.

MRS. GILFILLIAN enters the room followed by MINNIE.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*Much disturbed, giving CLEMENT two fingers.*] We

PHILIP.

[Ardently.] Otto —— !

OTTOLINE.

Isn't that patience?

[Their lips meet in a lingering kiss. The handle of the door on the left is heard to rattle. Looking at the door, they draw back from one another. The handle rattles again.]

PHILIP.

It's that idiot Robbie.

OTTOLINE.

Ha, ha, ha, ha —— !

[The door opens, and ROOPE appears, with an air of unconcern.]

ROOPE.

[Humming.] Tra, lal, lal, la —— ! That's done, dear excellent friends! [Closing the door, and coming forward.] Upon my word, letters are the curse of one's existence —— !

OTTOLINE.

Ha, ha —— ! [Seizing him.] Robbie —— !

ROOPE.

[Startled.] Hey?

OTTOLINE.

I can't take you to Lady Paulton's—or anywhere else. Philip and I are going to spend the rest of the afternoon here, if you'll let us—and talk—and talk —— ! [Suddenlv embracing him, and kissing him upon the cheek.] Ah! Que vous êtes gentil! Merci—merci—merci —— !

woman! [She shuts the door, and joins CLEMENT, as MINNIE looks round the room.] We left Nice on Tuesday, Clement. Minnie and I came straight through, but Mr. Wedderburn prefers to dwaddle for a week in Paris. [Handing CLEMENT a packet of cabinet photographs.] He sends you those portraits, done by Grotz of Monte Carlo. [Nervously.] Minnie, don't pry.

CLEMENT.

[Looking at the photographs.] Dear old guv'nor! [Reading the superscription on one of the portraits.] "For my boy—from Geoffrey Wedderburn." [To MRS. GILFILLIAN.] The fact is, aunt, I've already heard of your return from a gentleman who was good enough to call on me.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Not Mr. Bream!

CLEMENT.

Horace Pinkley Bream!

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[Sinking into armchair.] Oh!

MINNIE.

[Sitting on sofa.] Oh, ma!

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

We shall never shake him off. He saved Minnie's life in Paris by pulling her from under a tramcar in the Avenue Mirabeau.

THE SECOND ACT

The scene is a morning-room, richly furnished and decorated, in a house in Ennismore Gardens. The walls are of panelled wood for two-thirds of their height, the rest being covered with silk. In the wall at the back, between the centre and the left-hand corner, there is a handsome double-door opening upon another door, covered in thick cloth, which is supposed to give admittance to the library. On the right, in a piece of wall running obliquely towards the spectator from the back wall to the right-hand wall, is a companion double-door to that on the left, with the difference that the panels of the upper part of this door are glazed. A silk curtain obscures the glazed panels to the height of about seven feet from the floor, and above the curtain there is a view of a spacious hall. When the glazed door is opened, it is seen that the hall is appropriately furnished. A window is at the further end of it, letting in light from the street, and on the right of the window there is a lofty screen arranged in such a manner as to suggest that it conceals the front door of the house.

The fireplace, where a bank of flowers hides the grate, is in the left-hand wall of the room. On the further side of the fireplace there is an armchair, and before the fireplace a settee. Behind the settee, also facing the fireplace, are a writing-table and chair; close to the further side of the writing-table is a smaller chair; and at the nearer end of the settee, but at some distance from

CLEMENT.

It's sent in at one o'clock.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

We could remain, if——

CLEMENT.

[Blankly.] Delighted.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[To herself.] He must never be left again.

CLEMENT.

[Banging his hat on his head.] Confound !

[He goes out. MRS. GILFILLIAN looks to see that the door is closed, then rises, and crosses to MINNIE.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[With a gasp.] Minnie, my poor child ! You saw that young woman ?

MINNIE.

I'm afraid I did, mamma.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

What were they doing ? I have never felt my near sight so keenly.

MINNIE.

Clement was kneeling, mamma—in an ordinary way. And I think he was holding her hand.

WESTRIP.

[*Entering and closing the door.*] Lady Filson isn't down yet?

MISS TRACER.

No. [*Tossing the picture-paper on to the round table.*] She didn't get to bed till pretty late last night, I suspect.

WESTRIP.

[*Advancing.*] I thought she'd like to look through these. [*Showing MISS TRACER the press-cuttings.*] From the press-cutting agency.

MISS TRACER.

[*Picking up her note-book and rising.*] You bet she would!

WESTRIP.

[*Handing her the press-cuttings.*] Let me have them back again, please. Sir Randle hardly had time to glance at them before he went out.

MISS TRACER.

[*Inquisitively, elevating her eyebrows.*] He's out very early?

WESTRIP.

Yes ; he's gone to a memorial service.

MISS TRACER.

Another ! [*With a twinkle.*] That's the third this month.

WESTRIP.

So it is. I'm awfully sorry for him.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*With horror.*] Minnie! There's somebody else in that room!

MINNIE.

[*Retreating.*] Oh, ma!

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

And *this* is the Law!

DICK.

[*From within.*] Clement! Clement!

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*Listening.*] It's a man's voice—or a deep *contralto*.

DICK.

[*Still within.*] Locked in, Clement, my boy.

[MRS. GILFILLIAN turns the key in the door, and retreats. DICK enters in the old and worn wig and gown of a barrister.

DICK.

Thank you. [*Enquiringly.*] To see Mr. Hale?

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Oh, I have *seen* Mr. Hale. May I ask——?

DICK.

Richard Phenyl. Hale and I live together.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*Eagerly.*] Dear me! I wish to speak to you

wreaths were sent by . . . h'm, h'm, h'm, h'm . . . Sir Randle and Lady Filson ! [Replacing the press-cuttings upon the table.] Ha, ha, ha — ! [Checking herself and turning to WESTRIP.] Our conversation is strictly private, Mr. Westrip ?

WESTRIP.

[Somewhat disturbed.] Strictly.

MISS TRACER.

[Smiling at him winningly and moving to the settee before the fireplace.] You're a nice boy ; I'm sure you wouldn't make mischief. [Sinking on to the settee with a yawn.] Oh ! Oh, I'm so weary !

WESTRIP.

Weary ? Before you've begun your morning's work !

MISS TRACER.

Before I've begun it ! I had a parade down-stairs in the servants' hall at a quarter-to-ten.

WESTRIP.

Parade ?

MISS TRACER.

We've two new women in the house who are perfect idiots. They can't remember to say, " yes, my lady " and " no, my lady " and " very good, my lady " whenever Lady Filson speaks to them. One of them actually addressed her yesterday as " ma'am." I wonder the roof didn't fall in.

WESTRIP.

[Meditatively.] I've noticed that Sir Randle and Lady Filson have a great relish for being Sir'd and Lady'd.

[MINNIE stops playing, and MRS. GILFILLIAN goes to her, remonstrating.

DICK.

[To himself.] We're in for it. We've made our choice. We prefer linsey and a linen collar to satin and *Vulenciennes*. Very well! Now it's come to it, I'll stick to you, Clement, my boy! [Arranging his wig and gown, and striking a forensic attitude.] For the defendant!

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[Returning to DICK.] What you tell me is in perfect confidence.

DICK.

Not at all necessary, m'm—we court inquiry. The young lady is the daughter of Mrs. Rolt, who resides, to put it plainly, in the basement.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

A low woman?

DICK.

[Pointing downwards.] Geographically—not otherwise. [MINNIE resumes playing softly.]

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Nonsense, sir. These people attend upon you. This girl's mother is what you call a common servant.

DICK.

No, ma'am—she is what I call a lady.

he'd rendered to the cause of patriotism. Lambert saw the draft of the letter on her mistress's dressing-table. [Shaking with laughter.] Ho, ho, ho! And what d'ye think?

WESTRIP.

W-well?

MISS TRACER.

The corrections were in *his* handwriting!

WESTRIP.

[Shocked.] In Sir Randle's ——!

MISS TRACER.

[Jumping up.] Phiou! I'm fearfully indiscreet. [Going to WESTRIP and touching his coat-sleeve.] Between ourselves, Mr. Westrip!

WESTRIP.

[Moving to the round table.] Quite—quite.

MISS TRACER.

[Following him.] Oh, they're not a bad sort, by any means, if you just humor them a bit. We all have our little weaknesses, haven't we? I've mine, I confess.

WESTRIP.

They've both been excessively kind to *me*. [Turning to her.] And as for Madame de Chaumie —

MISS TRACER.

Oh, she's a dear—a regular dear!

WESTRIP.

[Fervently.] By Jove, isn't she!

HORACE.

[*Excitedly.*] Lost you at the Custom House counter last night—saw you in a hansom this morning—never meant to rest till I'd found you.

[HORACE goes to MINNIE.]

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*Helplessly sinking into a chair.*] Oh, dear me!

HORACE.

[*To MINNIE, taking her hand.*] My dear Miss Gilfillian !

MINNIE.

[*Distractedly.*] Oh, how do you do, Mr. Bream ?

RUTH.

[*Quietly to MRS. GILFILLIAN.*] You wish to speak to me, ma'am ?

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*Rising.*] Mrs. Rolt !

RUTH.

Yes.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

I have discovered that there have been—some—love passages between Mr. Hale and your daughter. I—I—

RUTH.

Yes. My daughter has just told me that Mr. Hale has offered her marriage.

WESTRIP.

It isn't here. [Going to the glazed door.] I'll hunt for it down-stairs.

LADY FILSON.

Thank you. [Discovering the pile of press-cuttings.] What's this? [Affecting annoyance.] Not more press-cuttings! [Beginning to devour the cuttings.] Tcht, tcht, tcht!

[As WESTRIP reaches the door, BERTRAM FILSON enters. He is wearing riding-dress.]

BERTRAM.

[A conceited, pompous young man of thirty.] Good-morning, Mr. Westrip.

WESTRIP.

Good-morning, Mr. Filson.

[WESTRIP goes out, closing the door.]

BERTRAM.

[To MISS TRACER.] Good-morning, Miss Tracer.

MISS TRACER.

[Who has seated herself in the chair at the further side of the writing-table—meekly.] Good-morning.

LADY FILSON.

[Half turning to BERTRAM, the press-cuttings in her hand.] Ah, my darling! Was that you I saw speaking to Underwood as I came through the hall?

BERTRAM.

Yes, mother dear. [Bending over her and kissing her.] How are you?

RUTH.

In—indeed. [*After a pause, she goes quickly to MRS. GILFILLIAN, and whispers.*] Madam! Madam! [MRS. GILFILLIAN turns.] You—you have misunderstood me. I—I give you my word my daughter shall never marry Mr. Hale.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*Rising, with the written telegram in her hand.*] What!

RUTH.

[*Glancing round.*] Hush!

[*LAVENDER enters the passage, and takes up the tray from the butler's stand. CLEMENT follows and stands whispering to her. MINNIE and HORACE are in close conversation.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

LADY FILSON.

[Reading a letter.] Lady Skewes and Mrs. Walter Quebec . . . arranging a concert in aid of . . . [sighing] tickets, of course! . . . what tiring women! . . . [turning the sheet] oh! . . . may they include me in their list of patronesses? . . . Princess Cagliari-Tamponi, the Countess of Harrogate, the Viscountess Chepmell, Lady Kathleen Tring . . . [laying the letter aside] delighted. [Heaping together the cards and the rest of the letters.] I must answer those myself. [To MISS TRACER.] That's all. [MISS TRACER rises.] Get on with the invitations for July the eighth as quickly as you can.

MISS TRACER.

[Going to the glazed door.] Yes, Lady Filson.

LADY FILSON.

[Turning.] Miss Tracer —

MISS TRACER.

[Halting.] Yes, Lady Filson?

LADY FILSON.

I think Madame de Chaumié wants you to do some little commissions for her. Kindly see her before you go to your room.

BERTRAM.

[To MISS TRACER, looking up.] No, no; don't.

LADY FILSON.

[To BERTRAM.] Not?

BERTRAM.

My sister is engaged, mother.

CLEMENT.

Any good news, Dick?

DICK.

[With a grunt.] No.

[DICK walks to and fro moodily.

CLEMENT.

How is she, Mrs. Rolt?

RUTH.

I fear just the same.

CLEMENT.

May I not see her for a moment—call to her at her door? I'll be quiet enough.

RUTH.

No, no—not yet.

CLEMENT.

Not yet, Mrs. Rolt. Still not yet. Oh, you mothers!

RUTH.

[Bitterly.] Ah—we mothers!

CLEMENT.

[Handing her the basket of flowers.] Give her these flowers with my— Say I— You know.

[He drops disconsolately into the armchair.

RUTH.

[Calmly.] Thank you. They are very beautiful.

[She goes out; CLEMENT then rises impatiently.

LADY FILSON.

I've a feeling that *something* is in the air. He positively shadowed her last night at the Gorhams'!

BERTRAM.

[*Knitting his brows.*] I admit I should prefer, if my sister contemplates marrying again, that her choice fell on one of the others.

LADY FILSON.

Mr. Trefusis—or George Delacour——?

BERTRAM.

Even Trevor Wilson. [Wincing.] The idea of a merchant brother-in-law doesn't appeal to me very strongly, I mean t'say.

LADY FILSON.

Still, a baronet——!

BERTRAM.

And I suppose——?

LADY FILSON.

Oh, enormously!

BERTRAM.

[*Magnanimously.*] Anyhow, my dear mother, if Ottoline is fond of the man, I promise you that not a murmur from me shall mar their happiness.

LADY FILSON.

[*Tenderly, pinching his chin.*] My darling!

BERTRAM.

[*With a shiver.*] I'm afraid I am getting a little chilled; [*giving her the press-cuttings*] I'll go and change.

be unduly distressing ourselves—I say *ourselves*, because in this case Mr. Richard Phenyl is *with* you.

CLEMENT.

Bless you, Dick !

DICK.

We should remember that we are youngsters at this sort of game ; that this is, in point of fact, the first time we have offered ourselves in marriage. For all we know, the prospect of an alliance with us would set up a condition of cerebral excitement in *any* young lady. [Taking up the poker to aid him in his argument.] No, no, Clement my boy, it isn't Lavvy's illness that puzzles me—

CLEMENT.

What then, Dick ?

DICK.

Why, the sudden, self-satisfied, affability of our aunt, Mrs. Gilsillian.

CLEMENT.

Ah !

DICK.

[Flourishing the poker.] There's an unpleasing air of truculent triumph in our aunt's demeanour that I resent, Clement, my boy !

CLEMENT.

And I too, Dick ! And the incessant civility and attention I'm in duty bound to show Mrs. Gilsillian drives me mad. Good gracious, Dick ! she and Minnie never leave me for a moment !

Missing Page

patience, declared I was neglecting my studies, and rushed away to buy a few flowers for my dear one.

DICK.

Well, Clem, perhaps it enables you to forget for a minute or two the poor little sick girl downstairs.

CLEMENT.

Ah, Dick, that's unworthy of you! Why, every street to me is "Lavender Street"; the newsboys shout nothing but "Lavender!" "Evening Lavender!" and the flower girls sell only sweet Lavender from their baskets. The whole world is perfumed with Lavender; and yet she and I seem so far apart, Dick--so very far apart.

[*There is a rat-tat at the outer door.*

DICK.

A visitor. Can it be our aunt?

CLEMENT.

[*Wearily.*] Open the door, Dick, like a good fellow.

[DICK opens the door, MINNIE is outside.

DICK.

Miss Gilfillian!

MINNIE.

Yes. May I see Clement, Mr. Phenyl?

DICK.

I don't wish to dazzle you, Miss Gilfillian, but you may see *both* of us. Come in.

SIR RANDLE.

None the worse for being self-made, Winnie.

LADY FILSON.

Not in *my* estimation.

SIR RANDLE.

H'm, h'm, h'm, h'm — !

LADY FILSON.

[*Softly.*] It wouldn't *sound* bad, Randle.

SIR RANDLE.

[*Leaning back in his chair and closing his eyes.*] "Lady Barradell."

LADY FILSON.

[*In the same way.*] "Lady Barradell."

SIR RANDLE.

[*In a murmur, but with great gusto.*] "A marriage is arranged and will shortly take place between Sir Timothy Barradell, Bart., of 16, The Albany, and Bryanstown Park, County Wicklow, and Ottoline, widow of the late Comte de Chaumié, only daughter of Sir Randle and Lady Filson, of 71, Ennismore Gardens, and Pickhurst, Bramsfold, Sussex."

LADY FILSON.

[*After a short pause, in a low voice.*] Darling Ottoline ! What a wedding she shall have !

[*Again there is a pause, and then SIR RANDLE leaves his chair and seats himself beside LADY FILSON.*

DICK.

[*Joining in the laugh.*] Ha, ha !

MINNIE.

[*Suddenly serious.*] It's awfully wrong.

DICK.

[*Seriously.*] Yes, it'll vex our aunt—Mrs. Gilfillian.

MINNIE.

[*To CLEMENT.*] But mamma will call for us here at half-past eight, Clem dear.

CLEMENT.

For us ?

MINNIE.

Why, haven't you received her letter ?

DICK.

Dear me, quite forgot—letter for you somewhere, Clem. [*Arranging the armchair for MINNIE.*] Miss Gilfillian, toss for the armchair ? I mean, try the armchair.

[*CLEMENT finds the letter on the teacup and opens it.*

CLEMENT.

[*Reading the letter disconsolately.*] " We have a box for four persons for the Cabinet Theatre to witness the new play about which people talk so much—'The Sealskin Jacket.' I hear it described as a salutary lesson to young men. We shall fetch you at half-

SIR RANDLE.

How we are pestered, Lady Filson and I!

LADY FILSON.

Terrible!

SIR RANDLE.

No peace! No peace!

LADY FILSON.

Or privacy.

WESTRIP.

[Producing a note-book from his pocket.] They will attend here any morning convenient to you and Lady Filson, Sir Randle. It won't take ten minutes.

SIR RANDLE.

[To LADY FILSON, resignedly.] Winnie——?

LADY FILSON.

[Entering the appointment on a tablet.] Tuesday at eleven.

SIR RANDLE.

[To WESTRIP.] Remind me.

WESTRIP.

[Writing in his note-book.] Yes, Sir Randle.

SIR RANDLE.

And advise Madame de Chaumié and Mr. Bertram, with my love, of the appointment. Her ladyship and I will be photographed with our children grouped round us.

WESTRIP.

[To SIR RANDLE.] Then there's a telegram from the *Daily Monitor*, Sir Randle——

[MINNIE *eyes* DICK, and looks at CLEMENT significantly.

MINNIE.

[In an undertone.] Clement—Mr. Phenyl!

CLEMENT.

Oh! yes. [Trying to attract DICK's attention.]
Dick!

DICK.

[Sitting at table.] No, no.

CLEMENT.

Dick!

DICK.

Rather busy to-night, Clement, my boy.

[CLEMENT makes signs to DICK to depart, while DICK, thinking that CLEMENT is renewing his persuasions with regard to the theatre, shakes his head.

CLEMENT.

[Impatiently.] Dick! [Whispers to him.

DICK.

Oh! [Shaking CLEMENT's hand.] My dear Clement!

[He snatches up a book from the sofa, a newspaper from the table, and a pipe and tobacco jar from the mantelpiece, and goes to the door of his own room.

WESTRIP.

Excellent, sir.

SIR RANDLE.

[Opening his eyes.] Pray amplify that in graceful language, Mr. Westrip—restricting yourself to forty-eight words— [He breaks off, interrupted by the appearance of OTTOLINE at the glazed door.] Ah, my darling!

OTTOLINE.

Good-morning, Dad. [To WESTRIP.] Good-morning.

WESTRIP.

[Shyly.] Good-morning.

OTTOLINE.

[To SIR RANDLE—advancing a few steps, but leaving the door open.] Are you and mother busy?

SIR RANDLE.

Not at all.

LADY FILSON.

[Who has turned in her chair at OTTOLINE'S entrance.] Not at all, Otto.

SIR RANDLE.

[To WESTRIP.] I will join you in the library, Mr. Westrip. [WESTRIP withdraws at the door on the left, and SIR RANDLE goes to OTTOLINE and embraces her.] My dear child!

OTTOLINE.

[In rather a strained voice.] Sir Timothy Barradell is here, Dad.

SIR RANDLE.

I heard he had called.

MINNIE.

About your studies. Come, Clem. [She takes his hand and places him on the sofa, then sits on the head of the sofa looking down upon him.] Let us be fogies for a moment. You know we were very fond of each other as children, weren't we?

CLEMENT.

Yes, Minnie, and—

MINNIE.

Hush! Well, then, dear, as we grew up we grew out of our love, as boys and girls outgrow their clothes. Your love, as it were, got too short in the waist, and mine wouldn't meet at the buttons. And at last, one fine day we yawned, Clem, and the seams of our affection parted.

CLEMENT.

[Taking her hand, embarrassed.] My dear Minnie—

MINNIE.

[Sitting beside him.] Ah, Clem, don't let us mourn for it; we're lucky to have yawned in time, dear. And so I want you to understand that I won't help to mend and patch an old attachment; I won't put an extra flounce or a new set of hooks and eyes on a garment a couple of children wore to rags years ago. There! That's what I call putting myself right with you.

CLEMENT.

[Tenderly-taking her hands.] My dear sister, how compassionate you are to me!

lently, and then SIR TIMOTHY BARRADELL enters. He is a well-knit, pleasant-looking Irishman of about forty, speaking with a slight brogue.

LADY FILSON.

[*Advancing to greet him.*] My dear Sir Timothy !

SIR TIMOTHY.

[*As they shake hands.*] And how's my lady this morning? Are you well?

OTTOLINE.

[*At the door.*] I'll leave you ——

SIR TIMOTHY.

[*Turning to her hastily.*] Ah —— ! [*Taking her hand.*] I'm not to see you again?

OTTOLINE.

[*Shaking her head.*] No. [Smiling.] We've said good-bye up-stairs. [*Withdrawing her hand.*] *Que Dieu vous protège!* Good luck to you!

SIR TIMOTHY.

[*Ruefully.*] Luck! [*In an undertone.*] I've never had anything else till now ; and now it's out entirely.

OTTOLINE.

[*Gently.*] Shhhh —— !

[*She goes into the hall and he stands watching her till she disappears. Then he closes the door and faces LADY FILSON and SIR RANDEL.*

SIR TIMOTHY.

[*Mournfully but good-humoredly.*] Ha ! That's over.

MINNIE.

Anything but marry me. Well, don't wait for Uncle Geoffrey's return, but write to him to the Hotel Rivoli in Paris, and tell him how you adore—my hated rival. Uncle Geof. is a bachelor, but married men and bachelors are manufactured by the same process—love, Clem—and he'll understand. Tell him all, and say that the girl you have lost your treacherous heart to has won one staunch friend—Minnie Gilfillian.

CLEMENT.

My dear sister, I'll write directly I get back from the theatre. [*Putting his hand to his breast.*] Shall I send him her portrait ?

MINNIE.

[*Pointing.*] You've got one there !

CLEMENT.

How did you guess ?

MINNIE.

You silly boy ? Show it me. [*She sits in the arm-chair ; he takes a small photograph from his pocket and hands it to her. She leans back, scrutinising the portrait with a great air of indifference.*] So this is the little lady I saw yesterday, in her best frock, is it ?

CLEMENT.

Yes I stole it from Dick Phenyl's album.

LADY FILSON.

[*Under her breath.*] Oh!

SIR RANDLE.

God bless me! Frankly, I had no conception —

LADY FILSON.

Nor I—the faintest.

SIR TIMOTHY.

And as I've received a great deal of kindness and hospitality in this house, I thought that, in common gratitude, I ought to explain the cause of my abrupt disappearance from your circle.

SIR RANDLE.

[*In a tone of deep commiseration.*] I—I understand. You—you intend to —?

SIR TIMOTHY.

To take a trip round the world, to endeavor to recover some of the wind that's been knocked out of me.

SIR RANDLE.

[*Closing his eyes.*] Distressing! Distressing!

LADY FILSON.

Most. [*Coming to SIR TIMOTHY, feelingly.*] Oh—oh, Sir Timothy —!

SIR TIMOTHY.

[*With sudden bitterness.*] Ah, Sir Timothy, Sir Timothy, Sir Timothy! And what's the use of my baronetcy *now*, will you inform me—the baronetcy I bought and paid for, in hard cash, to better my footing in society? The mockery of it! Now that I've lost *her*, the one woman I shall

MINNIE.

Hush, Clem ! [Taking his hand.] I'll tell you. When a girl knows she is loved by the man she loves she has a charmed life—her heart can't stop. If ever the *elixir vitae* is discovered, Clem, it'll turn out to be a bottle of something to keep a man and a woman in love with each other. There, run along and put its pretty things on for the theatre ! [He kisses her hand, and goes into his bedroom. [Seeing the tea-things.] Tea ! [Putting her hand on the teapot.] Hot ! I must take to tea violently, now I'm going to be an old maid. To-morrow I'll buy a kitten. [There is a rat-tat at the outer door.] Mamma ! What a scolding's in store for me ! Oh, dear !

[She goes to the door and opens it. HORACE BREAM is outside ; he is in evening dress, and carries a cane.

HORACE.

Mr. Hale ?

MINNIE.

[Startled.] Oh ! [She leaves the door in a flutter.] Horace Bream ! How awkward !

[HORACE closes the door and follows her into the room.

HORACE.

My dear Miss Gilfillian !

MINNIE.

[Uneasily.] I daresay you're surprised—to meet—

SIR TIMOTHY.

[*Sighing.*] If I'd had the pluck to declare myself sooner, it might have been different. [*Staring before him.*] From the moment I first set eyes on her, at the dinner-party you gave to welcome her on her arrival in London—from that moment I was captured completely, body and soul. The sight of her as she stood in the drawing-room beside her mother, with her pretty, white face and her elegant figure, and a gown clinging to her that looked as though she'd been born in it—'twill never fade from me if I live to be as old as a dozen Methuselahs !

SIR RANDLE.

[*Pryingly.*] Er—has Ottoline—I have no desire to probe an open wound—has she assigned any—reason — ?

SIR TIMOTHY.

[*Rousing himself.*] For rejecting me ?

SIR RANDLE.

[*With a wave of the hand.*] For —

LADY FILSON.

For not seeing her way clear —

SIR RANDLE.

To—er—in short—accept you ?

SIR TIMOTHY.

She *has*.

LADY FILSON.

Has she !

HORACE.

[*To himself.*] I can't—I can't endure this a minute longer.

[*He crosses to the sofa, where he sits watching MINNIE.*

MINNIE.

[*To herself.*] How embarrassing ! I wish I was buried !

HORACE.

[*To himself.*] If this continues for another five seconds I shall shriek aloud.

MINNIE.

I'll put a bold face on the matter—an American girl would be equal to twice this. [*Looking angrily at the back of the armchair, in which she supposes HORACE to be, while he watches her with curiosity.*] Bother ! [HORACE rises in surprise, and MINNIE, peeping over the back of the chair, finds it empty and turns, facing HORACE with a gasp] Oh ! [In confusion.] Pray excuse my having left you for a moment. Will you have some tea ?

[*Sitting.*

HORACE.

[*Resuming his seat.*] I shall be perfectly delighted. [*To himself.*] In English society while there is tea there is hope.

MINNIE.

Sugar ?

HORACE.

Thank you. [*Cheerfully to himself.*] We have fairly started.

depressing company. [Going to LADY FILSON, who rises at his approach, and taking her hand.] My dear lady —

LADY FILSON.

[Genuinely.] My dear Sir Timothy!

SIR RANDLE.

[Moving to the glazed door.] Painful! Painful!

[As SIR TIMOTHY turns from LADY FILSON, BERTRAM reappears, in morning-dress, entering from the hall.

BERTRAM.

[Drawing back on seeing SIR TIMOTHY.] Oh — !
[To SIR RANDLE.] Am I intruding?

SIR RANDLE.

Come in, my boy. You're just in time to give a parting grasp of the hand to our friend here.

BERTRAM.

[Advancing to SIR TIMOTHY, surprised.] Parting — ?

LADY FILSON.

[To BERTRAM.] Sir Timothy is going abroad, Bertram.

BERTRAM.

Really? [To SIR TIMOTHY.] Er—on business?

SIR TIMOTHY.

Well, not precisely on pleasure. [Shaking hands with BERTRAM.] Good-bye to you.

BERTRAM.

[Puzzled.] Good-bye. [SIR TIMOTHY makes a final bow to LADY FILSON and departs, followed by SIR RANDLE,

MINNIE.

[*Rising quickly and haughtily.*] Indeed!

HORACE.

[*Contemplating her.*] Now, how thoroughly characteristic that is of this old country. [Rising with his hat and cane.] Miss Gilfillian. [He goes to her—she moves away. He retreats, carefully choosing his position by selecting a particular spot in the pattern of the carpet with the end of his cane.] Miss Gilfillian, the time I have spent in your society and in that of your delightful mother has been extremely fascinating to me.

MINNIE.

[*Distantly.*] Oh, thank you. [Advancing a step or two.] I need not say I shall always remember gratefully the service you rendered me in Paris.

HORACE.

Pray don't allude to that. I—— [He goes towards her; she retreats to her former position. After a slight pause, he identifies his particular spot on the carpet and returns to it.] But, Miss Gilfillian, I cert'nly did hope that those enchanting moments in Nice and in Monte Carlo, where I had the honour of instructing you in *Trente et Quarante*, might be continued in this—dear old country. And that's why I'm here to consult my friend Hale.

MINNIE.

[*Firing up.*] Pray, what has Mr. Hale to do with it?

BERTRAM.

[*Walking about.*] Possibly ! Possibly !

LADY FILSON.

[*Anxiously.*] I do hope she realizes what she's doing, Bertram. Sir Timothy could buy them both up, with something to spare.

BERTRAM.

I agree, my dear mother ; but it would have been horribly offensive to *us*, I mean t'say, to see the name of Ottoline's husband branded upon sides of bacon in the windows of the provision-shops.

LADY FILSON.

Oh, disgusting ! [*Brightening.*] How sensibly you look at things, darling !

BERTRAM.

[*Taking up a position before the fireplace.*] Whereas George Delacour and Edward Trefusis are undeniably gentlemen—gentlemen by birth and breeding, I mean t'say.

LADY FILSON.

Trefusis is connected, through his brother, with the Northcrofts !

BERTRAM.

Quite so. If Ottoline married Edward, she would be Lady Juliet's sister-in-law.

LADY FILSON.

Upon my word, Bertie, I don't know which of the two I'd rather it turned out to be !

[SIR RANDLE returns, with a solemn countenance.
He closes the door and comes forward.]

MINNIE.

[*Angrily.*] I never see you, sir.

HORACE.

I trust I know better than to intrude.

MINNIE.

Where do you learn our movements.

HORACE.

At the hotel.

MINNIE.

[*Indignantly.*] You present yourself at our hotel !

HORACE.

You are staying at my hotel.

MINNIE.

Oh ! On the same floor, I presume.

HORACE.

No.

MINNIE.

[*Sarcastically.*] Thank you.

HORACE.

I occupy the room immediately beneath your own.

MINNIE.

To listen to my movements !

BERTRAM.

I venture to suggest it may be Edward Trefusis.

SIR RANDLE.

[*To BERTRAM, halting again.*] My dear boy, in a matter of this kind, I fancy we can rely on your mother's wonderful powers of penetration.

BERTRAM.

[*Bowing.*] Pardon, father.

LADY FILSON.

[*Closing her eyes.*] "Mrs. George Delacour."

SIR RANDLE.

[*Partly closing his eyes and again resuming his walk.*] "A marriage is arranged and will shortly take place between George Holmby Delacour, of—of—of ——"

BERTRAM.

[*Closing his eyes.*] "90, St. James's Street ——"

SIR RANDLE.

[*Halting and opening his eyes.*] One thing I heartily deplore, Winifred —

LADY FILSON.

[*Opening her eyes.*] What is that, Randle?

SIR RANDLE.

Ottoline being a widow, there can be no bridesmaids; which deprives us of the happiness of paying a pretty compliment to the daughters of several families of distinction whom we have the privilege of numbering among our acquaintances.

HORACE.

Then I shall ask permission to rejoin your most delightful party.

MINNIE.

Oh!

CLEMENT enters, dressed for the theatre.

CLEMENT.

Half-past eight.

[MINNIE, much disturbed, runs up to him.

MINNIE.

Clement, here is that Mr. Bream.

CLEMENT.

Eh? [Seeing HORACE and nodding distantly.] How d'ye do?

[HORACE returns CLEMENT's salutation with a genial wave of the hand.

HORACE.

How are you?

CLEMENT.

[Softly to MINNIE.] What's he doing here?

MINNIE.

[To CLEMENT.] Just what he does everywhere. He's the original little old man of the sea! [Stamping her foot.] He—he must be awfully fond of mamma!

CLEMENT.

[To himself.] We can't snub him after his splendid

BERTRAM.

Ladies Lilian and Constance Foxe —

LADY FILSON.

[*Writing.*] "Lady Eva Sherringham—Ladies Lilian and Constance Foxe —"

BERTRAM.

Lady Irene Pallant —

SIR RANDLE.

I *pray* there may be no captious opposition from Ottoline.

LADY FILSON.

Surely she doesn't want to be married like a middle-class widow from Putney! [*Writing*]. "Lady Blanche Finnis —"

BERTRAM.

If pages are permissible—to carry my sister's train, I mean t'say —

SIR RANDLE.

Pages—yes, yes —

BERTRAM.

There are the two Galbraith boys—little Lord Wensleydale and his brother Herbert —

LADY FILSON.

[*Writing.*] Such picturesque children!

SIR RANDLE.

I doubt whether the bare civilities which have passed between ourselves and Lord and Lady Galbraith —

HORACE.

[*Bowing.*] Oh, cert'nly. [To himself] That's just cruel, anyway.

DICK.

[*Clapping his hat on the mantelpiece and hastily removing his gloves.*] Couldn't think of it! Happy release for all parties.

HORACE.

[*Throwing his hat in the air and catching it.*] Ha !

MINNIE.

[To herself.] It is Fate !

[*There is a very pronounced rat-tat-tat at the outer door.*

MINNIE.

My mamma !

HORACE.

[To himself.] And, I hope, mine.

CLEMENT.

[To DICK.] That's aunt, Dick.

DICK.

Auntie, undoubtedly.

CLEMENT.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Will you--er ?

DICK.

No, Clement, my boy. I opened the door last -- your turn.

OTTOLINE.

[*Passing her hands over her face and walking to the settee on the right.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha — !

LADY FILSON.

[*Rising and moving to the fireplace, complainingly.*] Really, Ottoline — !

OTTOLINE.

[*Sitting upon the settee.*] Ha, ha, ha — !

LADY FILSON.

[*To BERTRAM, who is slowly getting to his feet.*] Go away, Bertie darling.

OTTOLINE.

Mais pourquoi? Bertie knows everything, obviously.

LADY FILSON.

Why shouldn't he, Otto? Your brother is as interested as we are —

OTTOLINE.

But of course! *Naturellement!* [With a shrug.] *C'est une affaire de famille.* [To BERTRAM, who is now at the door on the left, his hand on the door-handle.] Come back, Bertie. [Repeating her wry smile.] I shall be glad to receive your congratulations with mother's and Dad's. [To SIR RANDLE and LADY FILSON.] Sit down, Dad; sit down, mother. [SIR RANDLE sits in the chair on the left of the settee on the right, LADY FILSON in the low-backed armchair, and BERTRAM at the oblong table.] Are you very much surprised, dear people?

SIR RANDLE.

Surprised? Hardly.

MINNIE.

They're quicker than four-wheelers, mamma.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Quicker! They're faster. I never drove in hansoms alone till I was thirty-three, and then I made the driver promise not to look at me through the roof.

MINNIE.

They never do that when you're alone. Mamma—*[coaxing]*—I'm very sorry.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Sorry!

MINNIE.

I wanted to speak to Clement—just by ourselves—there!

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

You haven't quarrelled!

MINNIE.

Quarrelled! No. We understand each other better now than we have ever done.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[Patting MINNIE's cheek approvingly.] Perhaps I've been a little too cross with you *[In a whisper.]* But you must tell me everything to-night before you close your eyes. Mind—everything!

MINNIE.

Yes—everything!

OTTOLINE.

So that he might have taken the edge off the announcement I'm going to make—and spared me ——

SIR RANDLE.

The edge —?

LADY FILSON.

Spared you —? [Staring at OTTOLINE.] Ottoline, what on earth — !

OTTOLINE.

[Relaxing.] Oh, I know I'm behaving as if I were a girl instead of a woman who has been married—a widow—free—Independent—[to SIR RANDLE] thanks to your liberality, Dad! But, being at home, I seem to have lost, in a measure, my sense of personal liberty —

SIR RANDLE.

[Blandly but uneasily.] My child !

OTTOLINE.

That's it! Child! Now that I've returned to you, I'm still a child—still an object for you to fix your hopes and expectations upon. The situation has slipped back, in your minds, pretty much to what it was in the old days in the Avenue Montaigne. You may protest that it isn't so, but it is. [Attempting a laugh.] That's why my knees are shaking at this moment, and my spine's all of a jelly! [She rises and goes to the chair at the writing-table and grips the chair-rail. The others follow her apprehensively with their eyes.] I—I'm afraid I'm about to disappoint you.

LADY FILSON.

H-how?

[HORACE *talks to* MRS. GILFILLIAN, DICK chuckling at them.

MINNIE.

[*Quietly to CLEMENT.*] Clem, I must ask your advice about Mr. Bream, directly.

CLEMENT.

Delighted. [*Assisting MINNIE to put on her mantle.*] Bream, will you drive on with my aunt to the theatre? Minnie and I want to walk up to Brigg's, the florist's by Middle Temple Gate. We'll follow you in a cab.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*To herself.*] They *have* settled it! [*Shaking her fan at CLEMENT*] Ah—h—h! you sly boy. [*Good-humouredly taking HORACE'S arm.*] We're encumbrances. Come along, Mr. Bream!

HORACE.

Ruefully to himself.] Damn!

[*He takes MRS. GILFILLIAN out, leaving the door open.*

CLEMENT.

Good-night, Dick. [*Warningly.*] Word of honour, as usual!

DICK.

[*To CLEMENT, loftily.*] Word of honour, as usual, Clement, my boy.

LADY FILSON.

[*Dully.*] Isn't he the journalist man you—you carried on with once, in Paris?

OTTOLINE.

What an expression, mother! Well—yes.

SIR RANDLE.

[*Simply.*] Good God!

OTTOLINE.

He doesn't write for the papers any longer.

LADY FILSON.

W-what —— ?

OTTOLINE.

A novelist chiefly.

LADY FILSON.

[*Faintly.*] Oh !

SIR RANDLE.

Successful?

OTTOLINE.

It depends on what you call success.

SIR RANDLE.

I call success what everybody calls success.

BERTRAM.

[*Rising, stricken.*] There are novelists and novelists, I mean t'say.

BULGER.

You and me has known Mrs. Rolt the same len'th o' time, Mr. Phenyl.

DICK.

What of her?

BULGER.

There's no need for secrecy no longer, sir. I 'ave regarded Mrs. Rolt very deeply for years, sir.

DICK.

Bulger !

BULGER.

Ridickleous it seems, most likely—I don't deny it.

DICK.

Of course its ridiculous.

BULGER.

[*Angrily.*] I tell you I don't deny it, sir ! But it's 'ard to keep our place in this world when the place is a mean small one, and I 'ave so far forgot myself concerning Ruth Rolt as to drop into poetry.

[*He produces a folded paper from his hat.*
DICK shrinks away.]

DICK.

No !

BULGER.

Don't fear, sir. But this ev'ning while 'anging about the railin's downstairs—more like a thief than an old-established hairdresser—'oping for a chance to

THE BIG DRUM

SIR RANDLE.

[*Raising his hands.*] Romance!

LADY FILSON.

[*To SIR RANDLE and BERTRAM.*] Just now she was resenting our considering her a child!

OTTOLINE.

[*Looking down upon the flowers in the grate.*] Romance doesn't belong to youth, mother. Youth is greedy for reality—the toy that feels solid in its fingers. I was, and bruised myself with it. After such a lesson as I've had, one yearns for something less tangible—something that lifts one morally out of oneself—an ideal — !

SIR RANDLE.

Ha! An extract from a novel of Mr. Mackworth's apparently!

LADY FILSON.

[*Harshly.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha — !

OTTOLINE.

[*Turning sharply and coming forward.*] Sssh! Don't you sneer, mother! Don't you sneer, Dad! [Her eyes flashing.] C'est au-dessus de vous de sentir ce qu'il y a d'élévé et de grand! [Fiercely.] Tenez! Qu'il vous plaise ou non — !

[*She is checked by the entrance of UNDERWOOD from the hall.*

UNDERWOOD.

[*Addressing the back of LADY FILSON'S head.*] Mr. Philip Mackworth, m'lady.

LADY FILSON.

[*Straightening herself.*] Not for me. [Firmly.] For Madame de Chaumié.

BULGER goes into DICK's bedroom. The curtain is then pushed aside, and RUTH, in outgoing attire, looks in.

RUTH.

Mr. Phenyl!

DICK.

[With assumed lightness.] Ah, Ruth !

RUTH.

I've seen Mr. Hale go out with his friends ; is there any chance of his returning till late ?

DICK.

They're off to the play. He won't be back till past eleven.
[She drops the curtain.]

DICK.

What's this ? What's this ?

RUTH.

[Outside, calling softly.] Lavender ! Lavender !

DICK.

Lavender ! [RUTH pushes aside the curtain and enters with LAVENDER, who is also dressed for going out, while her face is pale, her eyes red with weeping.] Why, Lavvy !

BERTRAM.

[Jumping up as the door shuts—in an expostulatory tone.] Good heavens! My dear father—my dear mother——!

SIR RANDLE.

[Coming to earth.] Eh?

BERTRAM.

[Agitatedly.] My sister will pack her trunks and be off to an hotel if you're not careful. She won't stand this, I mean t'say. There'll be a marriage at the registrar's, or some ghastly proceeding—a scandal—all kinds of gossip——!

LADY FILSON.

[Throwing down her pen and rising—holding her heart.] Oh——!

BERTRAM.

[With energy.] I mean to say——!

SIR RANDLE.

[To LADY FILSON, blankly.] Winnie——?

LADY FILSON.

R-Randle——?

SIR RANDLE.

[Biting his nails.] He's right. [BERTRAM hastens to the glazed door.] Dear Bertram is right.

BERTRAM.

[Opening the door.] You'll see him——?

LADY FILSON.

Y-yes.

RUTH.

Mr. Hale! Why did he ever come here to bring this sorrow on me—to rob me of my little girl's love? What is Mr. Hale to me? I was rich before he came, because of her. My poor rooms were warm and well-furnished—all because of her. Yesterday any grand lady might have envied me—because of her. [Indignantly.] Mr. Hale, indeed!

LAVENDER.

Mother! I'm doing what you ask me, without complaining. But don't—don't speak against Mr. Hale any more.

DICK.

[Fiercely.] Speak against Mr. Hale! Who does? Ruth, who's at the bottom of this? I'll know—I'll know, before I let this boy's heart be broken as well as Lavvy's!

[LAVENDER goes to DICK and lays her head upon his shoulder, sobbing.

LAVENDER.

Oh, Mr. Phenyl! Will it break his heart? Will it—will it?

RUTH.

[To DICK, despairingly.] You'll undo all I've done. Don't! don't!

DICK puts LAVENDER from him gently. She goes and sits weeping on the window seat.

DICK.

Now, look here, Ruth Rolt!

LADY FILSON.

[Over her shoulder.] What is it? I can't bear much more —

SIR RANDLE.

He isn't even in *Who's Who*, Winnie!

[BERTRAM returns, out of breath.

BERTRAM.

I caught her on the stairs. [Closing the door.] She'll bring him down.

LADY FILSON.

[Weakly.] I won't be civil to him. I refuse to be civil to him.

SIR RANDLE.

[Replacing the book in the rack and sitting in the chair at the oblong table—groaning again.] Oh!

[There is a short silence. BERTRAM slowly advances.

BERTRAM.

[Heavily, drawing his hand across his brow.] Of course, my dear father—my dear mother—we must do our utmost to quash it—strain every nerve, I mean t'say, to stop my sister from committing this stupendous act of folly.

LADY FILSON.

[Rocking herself to and fro.] Oh! Oh!

SIR RANDLE.

A beggarly author!

BERTRAM.

[The picture of dejection.] But if the worst comes to the worst—if she's obdurate, I mean t'say—an alliance

for her mother. I've no right to it, but it has made my life endurable, even happy, and—imagine what it would be for me to lose it now

[DICK holds out his hand; she turns and takes it

DICK.

[*Falteringly.*] Ruth, did I speak crossly to you? Ruth, did I? I—I'm sorry; Lord forgive me—what a trouble and a worry I've been to you these fifteen years!

[RUTH leans upon the armchair, weeping.
LAVENDER comes to DICK.]

LAVENDER.

[*Faintly.*] Mother, may I sit with Mr. Phenyl, if he'll let me, till it's time for us to start?

DICK.

[*Patting her head.*] Of course, Lavvy—of course.

RUTH.

[*In a whisper to DICK.*] Oh, tell her that what I do is right. I know she'll never love me again as she has loved me; but be my friend and defend me, Mr. Phenyl. [To LAVENDER, as she is going towards the door.] In ten minutes, Lavender.

LAVENDER.

Yes, mother.

DICK.

[*Following RUTH.*] You won't confide in me where you're going, Ruth?

SIR RANDLE.

"—Mr. Philip Mackworth, the well-known novelist, to Ottoline, widow of the late Comte de Chaumié—[peeping into the hall through the side of one of the curtains of the glazed door—his voice dying to a mutter] only daughter of Sir Randle and Lady Filson ——"

LADY FILSON.

"Mrs.—Philip—Mackworth"! Ha, ha, ha! Mrs. Philip Nobody!

BERTRAM.

[Joining her.] Perhaps it would be wiser, mother, for me to retire while the interview takes place.

LADY FILSON.

[Falling upon his neck.] Oh, my dear boy ——!

SIR RANDLE.

[Getting away from the door.] They're coming!

BERTRAM.

[Quickly.] I'm near you if you want me, I mean t'say ——

[He goes out at the door on the left. LADY FILSON hastily resumes her seat at the writing-table, and SIR RANDLE, pulling himself together, crosses to the fireplace. The glazed door opens and OTTOLINE appears with PHILIP.

OTTOLINE.

[Quietly.] Mr. Mackworth, mother—Dad ——

PHILIP.

[Advancing to LADY FILSON cordially.] How do you do, Lady Filson?

DICK.

[*Distressed.*] Lavvy, you do ask such questions !

LAVENDER.

You know him very well ; perhaps he's talked to you a little about me. I'll believe you if you tell me I'm not fit for him. Is it true, Mr. Phenyl, is it true ?

[She breaks down, and sinking on her knees, bows her head on the arm of the chair, and sobs.]

DICK.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Lavvy—I——

LAVENDER.

[*Crying.*] Oh, it's not true, is it ?

DICK.

[*With an effort.*] Yes, Lavvy, it's true.

LAVENDER.

[*Faintly.*] Oh !

DICK.

It's the way of the world for poverty to make us sour and unjust ; and if Clem came to grief he might lay it at the door of the little doll's house which contained the little doll he'd married.

LAVENDER.

[*Rising, and drawing back.*] Oh, I don't believe that of Clem.

Ottoline gives you and Lady Filson unmixed pleasure.
On the contrary —

LADY FILSON.

[*Gulping.*] Pleasure! [*Unable to repress herself.*] Un-
mixed —! Ho, ho, ho —!

SIR RANDLE.

[*Restraining her.*] Winifred —!

OTTOLINE.

[*Coming to LADY FILSON and touching her gently—in a low voice.*] Mother —!

PHILIP.

[*Smiling at OTTOLINE apologetically.*] It's my fault;
I provoked that. [Walking away to the right.] I ex-
pressed myself rather clumsily, I'm afraid.

SIR RANDLE.

[*Expanding his chest and advancing to PHILIP.*] I
gather from my daughter, Mr. Mackworth, that you are
here for the purpose of "explaining your position" in re-
lation to her. I believe I quote her words accurately —

OTTOLINE.

[*Moving to the fireplace.*] Yes, Dad.

PHILIP.

That is so, Sir Randle—if you and Lady Filson will
have the patience —

[SIR RANDLE motions PHILIP to the settee on the
right. PHILIP sits. Then OTTOLINE sits on
the settee before the fireplace, and SIR RANDLE
in the armchair by PHILIP. LADY FILSON
turns in her chair to listen.]

[*She sobs.* DICK hears her and starts, putting his fingers in his ears.]

DICK.

[*Helplessly.*] Why did I promise to help Ruth?

LAVENDER.

Oh, Clement, Clement!

DICK.

[*To himself.*] Poor Clem! I shall never be able to look him in the face again. I—I—

[*He works his mouth as if his tongue were dry, then desperately looks into the teapot.*]

LAVENDER.

[*Writing.*] "It's for your good—I'm going away."
[*With another sob.*] Ah!

DICK.

[*Shutting the lid of the teapot.*] Empty.

[*He starts up, looks round quickly, then goes to the sideboard, stooping down and opening the cupboard, while he glances over his shoulder at LAVENDER.*]

LAVENDER.

[*Resting her head upon the table.*] Oh, I can't—I can't.

[DICK takes a decanter of whiskey and the carafe and tumbler from the sideboard and brings them to the table.]

SIR RANDLE.

[*Conscientiously.*] They are—I won't exaggerate—I mustn't exaggerate—they are not far removed from dismay.

LADY FILSON.

Utter dismay.

SIR RANDLE.

[*Shifting his chair—to PHILIP.*] I learn—I learn from Ottoline that you have forsaken the field of journalism, Mr. Mackworth, and now devote yourself exclusively to creative work? [*Another nod from PHILIP.*] But you have not—to use my daughter's phrase—up to the present —er —

PHILIP.

[*Nursing his leg.*] Please go on.

SIR RANDLE.

You have not been eminently successful?

PHILIP.

Not yet. Not with the wide public. No; not yet.

SIR RANDLE.

Forgive me—any private resources?

PHILIP.

None worth mentioning. Two-hundred-a-year, left me by an old aunt.

LADY FILSON.

[*Under her breath.*] Ho—!

SIR RANDLE.

[*To her.*] My dear —! [*To PHILIP.*] On the other hand, Mr. Mackworth, as you are probably aware, my

DICK.

[*Closing the door.*] Mr. Maw, I think?

MAW.

Yes. I am very late in leaving my office to-night, and seeing your light in your window—— [*Staring at DICK.*] I hope you're well?

DICK.

[*Drawing himself up with dignity.*] Qui' well, than'g you. Take a chair.

MAW.

[*Sitting—to himself.*] This man is in his usual condition, I'm afraid.

DICK.

[*Drawing the right side of the large curtain to meet the left side, completely hiding the further room from view.*] Excuse me, Lavvy—two minutes—two minutes.

[*He walks with rather uncertain steps to a chair and sits, mixing some whiskey and water.*]

MAW.

[*Taking some papers from his pocket—eyeing DICK.*] Well, well, perhaps it's better! I really pity him.

DICK.

[*Drinking.*] Broken my word to Ruth.

MAW.

[*Selecting from his papers a letter with a deep mourning border.*] Mr. Phenyl.

OTTOLINE.

[*Rising.*] Mother — !

PHILIP.

[*To SIR RANDLE, calmly.*] Oh, but—ah, Ottoline hasn't told you — !

OTTOLINE.

[*To PHILIP.*] No, I hadn't time, Philip —

PHILIP.

My dear Sir Randle—[*rising and going to LADY FILSON*]—my dear Lady Filson—let me dispel your anxiety for the preservation of my self-esteem. Ottoline and I have no idea of getting married yet awhile.

OTTOLINE.

No, mother.

LADY FILSON.

When, pray — ?

PHILIP.

We have agreed to wait until I have ceased to be—commercially—a failure.

OTTOLINE.

[*To SIR RANDLE and LADY FILSON.*] Until he has obtained public recognition ; [*coming forward*] until, in fact, even the members of one's own family, Dad, can't impute unworthy motives.

SIR RANDLE.

[*To PHILIP, incredulously—rising.*] Until you have obtained public recognition, Mr. Mackworth ?

PHILIP.

[*Smiling.*] Well, it may sound extravagant —

MAW.

[*Shortly.*] Whatever lack of toleration your uncle displayed towards you, Mr. Phenyl, he neglected to destroy a will made years ago entirely in your favour.

DICK.

[*Rising unsteadily.*] My fav'ah! Will in—my favah! My!

MAW.

[*Raising his hand.*] But, Mr. Phenyl——

DICK.

[*Swaying to and fro over Maw.*] But! Oh, I p'ceive. My poor uncle resembled his poor nephew—never thought of the rainy day when he'd want a pound or two to die with.

MAW.

I beg your pardon. I have a schedule here of bonds and other easily negotiable securities, deposited with his bankers, of the value of twenty-five thousand pounds.

DICK.

[*With his hand to his head.*] Wai'! Wai'! Twen'y-five thousan'——

MAW.

Beyond that I trace a further fifteen thousand entrusted to these bankers for investment at their discretion.

[DICK falls into his chair and gulps at his drink.

PHILIP.

Oh, I've been at it for nearly ten years.

LADY FILSON.

Ten years!

PHILIP.

[To SIR RANDLE.] I began soon after I left Paris.

SIR RANDLE.

And what ground, sir, have you for anticipating that you will *ever* achieve popularity as a writer?

LADY FILSON.

[*Sitting in the chair by the round table.*] Preposterous!

OTTOLINE.

[*Stamping her foot.*] Mother — ! [To SIR RANDLE.] Philip has high expectations of his next novel, Dad. It is to be published in the autumn—September.

SIR RANDLE.

[To PHILIP.] And should that prove no more successful with the "wide public" than those which have preceded it — ?

PHILIP.

Then I—then I fling another at 'em.

SIR RANDLE.

Which would occupy you — ?

PHILIP.

Twelve months.

LADY FILSON.

And if *that* fails — !

gram and looking through it as if it were a bank-note.] Largest bank-note I've ever had in my life.

[*Sticking the telegram in his waistcoat pocket, DICK staggers across the room as the door opens and CLEMENT enters with DICK's note in his hand.*]

CLEMENT.

[*Breathlessly.*] Dick !

DICK.

Clemen', my boy !

[CLEMENT comes upon DICK who is sitting helplessly on the arm of the chair.

CLEMENT.

[*Starting back.*] Dick ! You've been—drinking !

DICK.

No. [Pointing to MAW.] My s'litor, Mr. Maw.

MAW.

[*Brusquely.*] Mr. Phenyl is'nt very well, I'm afraid.

DICK.

[To MAW.] The spirits are with you, Mr. Maw.

MAW.

I'll see Mr. Phenyl in the morning.

[MAW goes out and shuts the door.

sha'n't be scowled at when he presents himself in Ennismore Gardens. [Seating herself beside SIR RANDLE and slipping her arm through his.] Dad —— !

LADY FILSON.

[To PHILIP.] Mr. Mackworth —— !

PHILIP.

[Rousing himself and turning to SIR RANDLE and LADY FILSON—abruptly.] Look here, Sir Randle ! Look here, Lady Filson ! I own that this arrangement between Ottoline and me is an odd one. It was arrived at yesterday impulsively ; and, in her interests, there is a good deal to be said against it.

LADY FILSON.

There's nothing to be said for it. Oh —— !

SIR RANDLE.

[To LADY FILSON.] Winifred —— [To PHILIP.] Well, Mr. Mackworth ?

PHILIP.

Well, Sir Randle, I—I'm prepared to take a sporting chance. It may be that I am misled by the sanguine temperament of the artist, who is apt to believe that his latest production will shake the earth to its foundation. I've gammoned myself before into such a belief, but—[resolutely] I'll stake everything on my next book ! I give you my word that if it isn't a success—an indisputable popular success—I will join you both, in all sincerity, in urging Ottoline to break with me. Come ! Does that mollify you ?

[There is a short silence. SIR RANDLE and LADY FILSON look at each other in surprise and OTTOLINE stares at PHILIP open-mouthed.

won't you? It's Ruth who'll never forgive me. I'll hide from Ruth! I can't face Ruth! [Taking up the decanter and tumbler and crossing to the door of his bedroom.] The las' time, Clemen', my boy—the las' time!

[He stumbles out, as CLEMENT comes through the curtains supporting LAVENDER. He places her gently upon the sofa.

CLEMENT.

I— [In a whisper.] Dick—I didn't mean what I said.

LAVENDER.

[Opening her eyes.] Clement!

CLEMENT.

[Bending over her.] Lavender!

LAVENDER.

The letter—the letter I was writing to you!
Fetch it.

CLEMENT.

The letter!

[He disappears through the curtain.

LAVENDER.

He musn't find out to-night that mother is taking
me away!

CLEMENT re-enters with the letter.

CLEMENT.

Won't you give it to me?

LADY FILSON.

[*Stiffly.*] Ottoline is her own mistress, Mr. Mackworth; [*more amiably*] but apart from her, you will receive a card from me—music—Tuesday, July the eighth.

[*He bows and she crosses to the fireplace. Then he shakes hands with SIR RANDLE, who has risen and is standing in the middle of the room.*

PHILIP.

[*To SIR RANDLE.*] Good-bye.

SIR RANDLE.

[*Detaining PHILIP, searchingly.*] Er—pardon me—this new novel of yours, on which you place so much reliance —pray don't think me curious —

OTTOLINE.

[*Suddenly.*] Ha! [Coming to the back of the settee on the right, her eyes gleaming scornfully at SIR RANDLE.] Tell my father, Philip—tell him —

PHILIP.

[*Shaking his head at her and frowning.*] Otto —

OTTOLINE.

Do; as you told it to me yesterday. [*Satirically.*] It will help him to understand why your name has escaped him in the great journals!

SIR RANDLE.

Any confidence you may repose in me, Mr. Mackworth —

CLEMENT.

[*Startled.*] Lavender !

LAVENDER.

[*Under her breath, clasping her hands.*] Mother !
don't take me away ! Don't, don't take me away !

CLEMENT.

Lavender ! You're angry with me.

LAVENDER.

[*Pointing to the clock.*] No ; but I'd forgotten—
Mother is waiting for me. Good-night, Clement.

CLEMENT.

Ah, no—not yet.

LAVENDER.

I must—I—I promised. And, Clement, you *have*
been very troubled about me, the few hours we've
been separated, haven't you ?

CLEMENT.

Troubled ! If you only knew !

LAVENDER.

Well, then, dear, I want you to remember, if ever
we're parted again——

CLEMENT.

No—not again, Lavender.

an arena for the exhibition of vulgar ostentation or almost superhuman egoism—a cockpit resounding with raucous voices bellowing one against the other!

SIR RANDLE.

[*Closing his eyes.*] A terrible picture!

LADY FILSON.

[*Closing her eyes.*] Terrible.

PHILIP.

It shows the bishop and the judge playing to the gallery, the politician adopting the methods of the cheap-jack, the duchess vying with the puffing draper; it shows how even true genius submits itself to conditions that are accepted and excused as "modern," and is found elbowing and pushing in the hurly-burly. It shows how the ordinary decencies of life are sacrificed to the paragraphist, the interviewer, and the ghoul with the camera; how the home is stripped of its sanctity, blessed charity made a vehicle for display, the very graveyard transformed into a parade ground; while the outsider looks on with a sinking of the vitals because the drumstick is beyond his reach and the bom-bom-bom is not for *him*! It shows — ! [*Checking himself and leaving the armchair with a short laugh.*] Oh, well, that's the setting of my story, Sir Randle! I won't inflict the details upon you.

SIR RANDLE.

Er—h'm—[*expansively*] an excellent theme, Mr. Mackworth; a most promising theme! [To LADY FILSON.] Eh, Winifred?

LADY FILSON.

[*Politely.*] Excellent; quite, quite excellent!

[Seizing her opportunity, with a last look at CLEMENT, she goes softly up to the outer door. As she reaches it there is a loud rat-tat-tat, and, with a cry, she comes back into the room.

LAVENDER.

Clement!

CLEMENT.

[Turning.] Hullo! A caller for Dick, I expect. Whoever it is, he doesn't come in.

[He goes up to the outer door and opens it.
MR. GEOFFREY WEDDERBURN is outside.

WEDDERBURN.

[Heartily.] Clement, my dear lad!

CLEMENT.

Father!

[With a low cry, LAVENDER disappears through the curtain, as WEDDERBURN enters, while CLEMENT, having closed the door, looks around for her. GEOFFREY WEDDERBURN is a handsome, well-preserved man of about fifty, with a ruddy face, a bright cheery voice with a slight burr in it, and the air and manner of a prosperous country gentleman. He is dressed in tweeds and an ulster, as if from a journey. He throws his hat and gloves upon the sofa, then turns to CLEMENT with open arms.

SIR RANDLE.

A grossly offensive book !

LADY FILSON.

[Anxiously.] He—he'll keep his word — ?

SIR RANDLE.

To join us in persuading her to drop him —

LADY FILSON.

If it fails ?

SIR RANDLE.

[With conviction.] Yes. [Walking about.] Yes. We must be just. We owe it to ourselves to be just to Mr. Mackworth. He is not altogether devoid of gentleman-like scruples.

LADY FILSON.

[Breathlessly.] And—and she — ?

SIR RANDLE.

I trust—I trust that my child's monstrous infatuation will have cooled down by the autumn.

LADY FILSON.

[Supporting herself by the chair at the writing-table, her hand to her heart—exhausted.] Oh ! Oh, dear !

SIR RANDLE.

[Returning to her.] I conducted the affair with skill and tact, Winifred ?

LADY FILSON.

[Rallying.] It was masterly—[kissing him] masterly —

CLEMENT.

And you're not angry, father?

WEDDERBURN.

Angry. Now, have I ever been angry with you, my boy?

CLEMENT.

No, dad—never.

WEDDERBURN.

No, and a plague of a child you've been, too.

CLEMENT.

[*Laughing.*] Ha, ha!

WEDDERBURN.

[*Taking CLEMENT's hand and looking into his face.*] But the only time you really hurt me, Clem, was when you had the fever years ago, and I sat by your bedside through some dreadful nights and—you didn't know me when I spoke to you. Ah, Clem!

CLEMENT.

[*Putting his hand on WEDDERBURN's shoulder.*] Ah, dad!

WEDDERBURN.

However, confound that! [*Selecting a telegram from among his letters and looking at it through a gold-rimmed eye-glass.*] And so she's the daughter of the laundress of these new chambers of yours, is she, Clement?

THE THIRD ACT

The scene represents two rooms, connected by a pair of wide doors, in a set of residential chambers on the upper floor of a house in Gray's Inn. The further room is the dining-room, the nearer room a study. In the wall at the back of the dining-room are two windows; in the right-hand wall is a door leading to the kitchen; and in the left-hand wall a door opens from a vestibule, where, opposite this door, there is another door which gives on to the landing of the common stair.

In the study, a door in the right-hand wall admits to a bedroom; in the wall facing the spectator is a door opening into the room from the vestibule; and beyond the door on the right, in a piece of wall cutting off the corner of the room, is the fireplace. A bright fire is burning.

The rooms are wainscotted to the ceilings and have a decrepit, old-world air, and the odds and ends of furniture—all characteristic of the dwelling of a poor literary man of refined taste—are in keeping with the surroundings. In the dining-room there are half-a-dozen chairs of various patterns, a sideboard or two, a corner-cupboard, a "grandfather" clock, and a large round table. In the study, set out into the room at the same angle as the fireplace, is a writing-table. A chair stands at the writing-table, its back to the fire, and in the front of the table is a well-worn settee. On the left of the settee

into a portmanteau, and come back with me to the hotel to-night. [Taking up his hat and coat.

CLEMENT.

Dad ! You—you don't understand. I can never leave here until—Father, Lavender is to be my wife !

[WEDDERBURN stands for a moment thoughtfully, then throws down his hat and coat and crosses to the fireplace, taking a cigar from his cigar-case, while CLEMENT watches him.

WEDDERBURN.

Clement, my dear boy, my son, when I was a young man—old enough to know better, but a young man—I fell in love with a woman just as enchanting, I dare swear, as this Miss—Lavender, as you call her.

CLEMENT.

Well, father ?

WEDDERBURN.

She was a woman in humble life but I loved her—dearly. But just as I was on the point of marrying her, Clem, my hard, old-fashioned common-sense pulled me back.

CLEMENT.

Ah, sir !—why ?

WEDDERBURN.

Why ? Why, my lady would have been all elbows, as we say, among the starched gentlefolks of Barnchester. She would have been mercilessly cut by the whole county, Clement.

[PHILIP, a pipe in his mouth and wearing an old velvet jacket, is lying upon the settee on the right, reading a book by the light of the lamp on the writing-table. In the dining-room, JOHN and a waiter—the latter in his shirt-sleeves—are at the round table, unfolding a white table-cloth.

JOHN.

[A cheery little man in seedy clothes—to the waiter, softly.] Careful! Don't crease it.

PHILIP.

[Raising his eyes from his book.] What's the time, John?

JOHN.

Quarter-to-six, sir.

PHILIP.

Have my things come from the tailor's yet?

JOHN.

[Laying the cloth with the aid of the waiter.] Yes, sir; while you were dozing. [Ecstatically.] They're lovely, sir. [A bell rings in the vestibule.] Expect that's the cook, sir. [He bustles into the vestibule from the dining-room. There is a short pause and then he reappears, entering the study at the door opening from the vestibule, followed by ROOPE.] It's Mr. Roope, sir!

PHILIP.

No! [Throwing his book aside and jumping up.] Why, Robbie!

CLEMENT.

God bless you for all your goodness to me, sir ; but she is to be my wife.

DICK.

[*Calling from his room.*] Clemen' , my boy ! Clemen' !

WEDDERBURN.

What's that ?

CLEMENT.

[*Going towards the door of DICK's room.*] Hush, Dick !

[*The door opens, and DICK staggers on, flourishing the telegram which MAW has given him.*

DICK.

Clemen' ! Look here ! This telegram to my s'licitor ! Look !

CLEMENT.

[*Trying to silence him.*] Be quiet, Dick ! Mr. Wedderburn !

DICK.

Wedderburn !

WEDDERBURN.

May I ask the name of your friend ?

CLEMENT.

Richard Phenyl. We share these rooms together.

WEDDERBURN.

[*Angrily, to DICK.*] Then, sir, I congratulate you on acquiring the undivided companionship of Mr.

PHILIP.

[*Walking about and spouting, in high spirits.*] "Italia ! O Italia ! thou who hast the fatal gift of beauty — ! "

ROOPE.

Sir Loftus and Lady Glazebrook were moving on to Rome, or I really believe I could have endured another month at their villa, bores as they are, dear kind souls ! [*Looking towards the dining-room, where JOHN and the waiter are now placing a handsome centre-piece of flowers upon the round table.*] Hallo ! A dinner-party, Phil ?

PHILIP.

Dinner-party ? A banquet !

ROOPE.

To celebrate the success of the book ?

PHILIP.

That and something more. This festival, sir, of the preparations for which you are a privileged spectator— [shouting to JOHN] shut those doors, John —

JOHN.

Yessir.

PHILIP.

[*Sitting in the chair on the left of the smoking-table as JOHN closes the big doors.*] This festival, my dear Robbie — [glancing over his shoulder to assure himself that the doors are closed] this festival also celebrates my formal engagement to Madame de Chaumié.

ROOPE.

[Triumphantly.] Aha !

[DICK opens the door and admits MRS. GILFILLIAN, MINNIE, and HORACE. The two former, seeing WEDDERBURN, go to him, while HORACE speaks rapidly to CLEMENT. DICK, leaving the door open, joins them.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Geoffrey !

MINNIE.

Uncle ! Uncle ! [Putting her arm round his neck.] There's some dreadful news in the paper—about the bank, Uncle Geoffrey.

WEDDERBURN.

The paper—send for it ; let me see it.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Geoffrey, it isn't true.

WEDDERBURN.

[With an effort.] Show me—the paper. [Hearing a movement, he turns sharply and sees CLEMENT reading from a newspaper which HORACE holds.] You have it there—give it me. [MRS. GILFILLIAN sits weeping on the sofa ; MINNIE stands bending over her consolingly. CLEMENT gives WEDDERBURN the newspaper. After looking at the paper for a moment, WEDDERBURN, with a groan, bows his head upon the mantelpiece. In a smothered voice.] The villains ! Dishonour ! Dishonour !

RUTH.

[Calling softly outside.] Lavender ! Lavender ! [She enters hurriedly.] Lavender ! [To CLEMENT, seeing

and that I shall wake up to the necessity of counting my pence again and apologizing to John for being in arrear with his wages !

ROOPE.

And Titterton's letter brought the Filsons round?

PHILIP.

[*Nodding.*] Brought 'em round ; and I must say they've accomplished the change of attitude most graciously.

ROOPE.

[*Oracularly.*] Graciously or grudgingly, they couldn't help themselves, dear excellent friend. As you had pledged yourself in effect to resign the lady if your book was a failure, it follows that they were bound to clasp you to their bosoms if it succeeded. I don't want to detract from the amiability of the Filsons for an instant —

PHILIP.

Anyhow, their opposition is at an end, and all is rosy. [*Rising and pacing the room.*] Master Bertram is a trifle glum and stand-offish perhaps, but Sir Randle — ! Ha, ha, ha ! Sir Randle has taken Literature under his wing. Robbie, from Chaucer to Kipling, in the person of his prospective son-in-law. You'd imagine, to listen to him, that to establish ties of relationship with a literary man has been his chief aim in life.

ROOPE.

[*Jerking his head in the direction of the dining-room.*] And this is to be a family gathering — ?

PHILIP.

The first in the altered circumstances. I proposed a feast at a smart restaurant, but Sir Randle preferred the

THE THIRD ACT

The scene is the same as before, but the time is a week later.

CLEMENT, looking weary and downhearted, comes from his bedroom.

CLEMENT.

[*As he closes the door.*] Father, I shall be with you in half-an-hour.

[*He takes up his hat, as DICK, improved in appearance, but without his coat, and wearing a housemaid's apron, and carrying a long carpet-broom, a dustpan, and a hand-broom, enters the room from the passage.*

DICK.

Going out, Clement, my boy ?

CLEMENT.

Why, what are you doing, Dick ?

DICK.

I've had a fierce, a terrible, altercation with Mrs.

PHILIP.

[Coming forward.] As a matter of fact, Robbie, I'm inclined to agree with you ; I've been staring into my fire, or out of my windows here, a jolly sight too much. [Expanding his chest.] It'll be refreshing to me to rub shoulders with people again for a bit—[smiling] even to find myself the object of a little interest and curiosity.

ROOPE.

[Delighted.] Dear excellent friend !

PHILIP.

Ha, ha ! You see, I'm not without my share of petty vanity. I'm consistent, though. Didn't I tell you in South Audley Street that I was as eager for fame as any man living, if only I could win it in my own way ?

ROOPE.

You did.

PHILIP.

[Exultingly.] Well, I have won it in my own way, haven't I ! [Hitting the palm of his hand with his fist.] I've done what I determined to do, Robbie ; what I knew I should do, sooner or later ! I've got there—got there !—by simple, honest means ! Isn't it glorious ?

ROOPE.

[Cautiously.] I admit —

PHILIP.

[Breaking in.] Oh, I don't pretend that there haven't been moments in my years of stress and struggle when I've been tempted to join the gaudy, cackling fowl whose feathers I flatter myself I've plucked pretty thoroughly in my book ! But I've resisted the devil

don't wish to put side on over a few paltry foolish kidneys, but—[raising the dish-cover]—confound it, they haven't looked at 'em.

CLEMENT.

[Inspecting the dish with DICK.] I'm afraid they have, Dick.

DICK.

[Indignantly.] Of course ! Go on ! Blame, blame ; but praise—oh dear, no ! [He takes up the teapot, and begins to sprinkle the tea-leaves on the floor angrily.] If you're going out, I'll not detain you. I am nervous when watched.

CLEMENT.

[Not heeding him.] I have to meet Mr. Maw at half-past ten to hear the result of the meeting of the bank creditors at Barnchester yesterday.

DICK.

Oh !

CLEMENT.

But the ship's hopelessly aground, Dick, and we shall never get her off again—another bump or two and she breaks up ; a few spars float out seaward in the shape of poor ruined depositors, and there's an end. And what an end ! Driven on to the rocks by a couple of rogues while the skipper is asleep below. There's a moral in it all, Dick.

DICK.

[Sprinkling the tea-leaves.] There is, Clement, my

ROOPE.

[*His hat on his head, drawing on his gloves.*] Dear excellent friend! I should be out of place.

PHILIP.

Rubbish! Your presence would be peculiarly appropriate, my dear Robbie. Wasn't it you who brought Ottoline and me together, God bless yer! [*Observing that ROOPE is weakening.*] There's heaps of room for an extra chair. Everybody 'ud be delighted.

ROOPE.

[*Meditatively.*] I could telephone to Hughie excusing myself. He didn't ask me till this afternoon. [*With an injured air.*] I resent a short notice.

PHILIP.

[*His eyes twinkling.*] Quite right. Mine's short too —

ROOPE.

That's different.

PHILIP.

Entirely. You'll come?

ROOPE.

If you're certain the Filsons and Madame de Chau-mié —

PHILIP.

Certain. [*Following ROOPE to the door admitting to the vestibule.*] Eight o'clock.

ROOPE.

[*Opening the door.*] Charming.

DICK.

[*Exultingly.*] I think the news will be a little better than you expect, Clement, my boy! [Singing, with a few steps of a dance.] La d-diddle! La-d-diddle! La-di-diddle-da!

CLEMENT.

[*Returning.*] Oh, Dick!

[DICK checks himself suddenly, and comes down, letting the tea run out of the spout of the teapot.]

DICK.

[*Enquiringly.*] Clement, my boy? Oh!

[Replacing the teapot on the table and taking up the broom.]

CLEMENT.

[Taking a slip of paper from his waistcoat pocket.] I think you ought to know that I'm going to leave this at the newspaper office for insertion in to-morrow's paper. [Reading.] "Sweet Lavender." [Showing him the paper.] See Dick? The first and last letters—all the rest stars.

DICK.

Very ingenious.

CLEMENT.

[Reading.] "R. P." (I've ventured to use your initials, old fellow.) "R. P. entreats his old friend and her daughter to communicate with him without delay. R. P. is distracted at their absence."

PHILIP.

Extremely civil of him, if that's the case. [Loftily.] Decent sort of fellow, I recollect.

ROOPE.

[Going into the vestibule.] Very ; very.

PHILIP.

Poor chap !

ROOPE.

[Opening the outer door.] Eight o'clock, dear excellent friend.

PHILIP.

[At his elbow.] Sharp.

ROOPE.

[Disappearing.] Au revoir !

PHILIP.

Au revoir ! [Calling after ROOPE.] Mind that corner ! [Closing the outer door with a bang and shouting.] John ! [Coming back into the study.] John ! [Closing the vestibule door.] John ! [Going to the big doors and opening the one on the left a little way.] John —— !

[OTTOLINE, richly dressed in furs, steps through the opening and confronts him. Her cheeks are flushed and her manner has lost some of its repose.

OTTOLINE.

[Shutting the door behind her as she enters—playfully.] Qu'est-ce que vous désirez John ?

PHILIP.

[Catching her in his arms.] My dear girl !

DICK.

[*Sweeping wildly.*] Oh!

CLEMENT.

My aunt declares it is all Mrs. Rolt's doing. [*Returning the letter to his pocket fiercely.*] I hope so, for if I ever find out to the contrary— [DICK sweeps up against CLEMENT violently.] Confound you, Dick! What are you doing?

DICK.

You're hindering me! You're delaying the house-work! Go out!

CLEMENT.

Don't be angry with me. I'm going.

[CLEMENT goes out.

DICK.

[*Wiping his forehead.*] Phew! When he breaks out like that, I—I always break out like this. If he only suspected that I assisted at the cramming of the philosophy!

[MR. BULGER comes from CLEMENT's room carrying shaving paraphernalia.

BULGER.

[*Very dejectedly.*] Good morning, Mr. Phenyl. I rather fancy as Mr. Wedderburn is a trifle better this morning. He demanded to be shaved *up*, sir—always a sign of vitality in a gentleman.

[He goes to the door of Dick's bedroom, and has his hand on the handle, when DICK starts up with a cry of horror.

PHILIP.

[*Still gazing at the scarf-pin.*] To-morrow I'll buy the most beautiful silk scarf ever weaved.

OTTOLINE.

Phil, I've a feeling that it's from to-night, when I sit at your table—how sweet your flowers are ; I couldn't help noticing them !—I've a feeling that it's from to-night that we really belong to each other.

PHILIP.

[*Pressing her closer to him.*] Ah — — !

OTTOLINE.

[*With a shiver, closing her eyes.*] What has gone before has been hateful—hateful !

PHILIP.

[*Looking down upon her fondly.*] Hateful ?

OTTOLINE.

Until—until your book commenced to sell, at any rate. Suspense—a horrid sensation of uneasiness, mistrust—the fear that, through your foolish, hasty promise to mother and Dad, you might, after all, unite with them to cheat me out of my happiness ! That's what it has been to me, Philip.

PHILIP.

[*Rallying her, but a little guiltily.*] Ha, ha, ha ! You goose ! I knew exactly how events would shape, Otto ; hadn't a doubt on the subject. [*Shutting the jewel-case with a snap and a flourish.*] I knew — —

OTTOLINE.

[*Releasing herself.*] Ah, yes, I dare say I've been dreadfully stupid. [*Shaking herself, as if to rid herself of*

DR. DELANEY.

[*As he enters.*] Thank ye, thank ye. [Shaking hands with DICK.] It's Mr. Phenyl. And how's our friend Wedderburn this delightful morning?

DICK.

Um—pretty well for a man who appears to grow a year older every day.

DR. DELANEY.

You don't say that?

DICK.

I do. It seems to me, Dr. Delaney, that your patient is ageing on the tobogganing principle.

DR. DELANEY.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Ah—um!

DICK.

[*Enthusiastically.*] But the ladies, doctor! They come out gloriously.

DR. DELANEY.

Bless 'em, they always do.

DICK.

I wouldn't have believed it of aunt—Mrs Gilfillian. But she seems to have bought the goodwill and fixtures of the business formerly carried on by Miss Nightingale.

DR. DELANEY.

My dear Mr. Phenyl, all ladies are aloike when

vagabond feet and sunshine to heal our sore bodies!
 [She raises her head and rummages for her handkerchief.]
 Otto——!

OTTOLINE.

Yes?

PHILIP.

In April—eh——?

OTTOLINE.

[Drying her eyes.] April——?

PHILIP.

You haven't forgotten the compact we entered into at Robbie Roope's?

OTTOLINE.

[Brightening.] Ah, no!

PHILIP.

In April we walk under the chestnut-trees once more in the Champs-Elysées——!

OTTOLINE.

[Smiling through her tears.] And the Allée de Longchamp——!

PHILIP.

As husband and wife—we shall be an old married couple by then——!

OTTOLINE.

[Pulling on her glove.] And drink milk at the d'Armenonville——!

PHILIP.

And the Pré-Catelan——!

DICK.

Exercise ! [Removing his coat, then seizing his broom and sweeping violently.] Exercise ! [Wiping his brow again.] Phew ! This is rather dry and dusty for my complaint. [Sweeping.] But it's exercise.

[MINNIE, simply dressed and wearing a pretty white apron, comes from DICK's room.]

MINNIE.

Oh, Mr. Phenyl, what are you doing ?

DICK.

[Painting.] Making up Doctor Delaney's prescription. Please return to your room for a quarter of an hour, Miss Gilfillian.

MINNIE.

[Retreating.] Oh, the dust ! [Taking up the hand-broom and dustpan from the sofa.] And look here !

[DICK sweeps again. MRS. GILFILLIAN, plainly dressed and without her curls, comes from CLEMENT'S room.]

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Mercy on us ! What's this ?

[She throws open the window.]

MINNIE.

[Laughing.] Mr. Phenyl is sweeping, mamma.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Sweeping ! Where's that woman McOstrich ?

PHILIP.

[After a pause.] Fancy!

OTTOLINE.

[Faintly.] Fancy! [He is drawing her to him slowly when, uttering a low cry, she embraces him wildly and passionately.] Oh! [Clinging to him.] Oh, Phil! Oh—oh—oh —!

PHILIP.

[Responding to her embrace.] Otto—Otto —!

OTTOLINE.

[Breaking from him.] Oh —!

[She hurries to the outer door. He follows her quickly, closing the vestibule door after him. Then the outer door is heard to shut, and the curtain falls. After a short interval, the curtain rises again, showing all the doors closed and the study in darkness save for the light of the fire. The bell rings, and again there is an interval; and then the vestibule door is opened by JOHN—attired for waiting at table—and BERTRAM brushes past him and enters. BERTRAM is in evening dress.

BERTRAM.

[As he enters, brusquely.] Yes, I know I'm a little too soon. I want to speak to Mr. Mackworth—before the others come, I mean t'say —

[JOHN switches on the light of a lamp by the vestibule door. It is now seen that BERTRAM is greatly flustered and excited.

JOHN.

[Taking BERTRAM'S hat, overcoat, etc.] I'll tell Mr. Mackworth, sir. He's dressin'.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Bless the man ! Take his broom away, Minnie—
take his broom away !

[MINNIE takes the broom from DICK and goes out with it.]

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

I wonder if I can guess what you allude to,
Mr. Phenyl.

DICK.

[Resuming his coat.] Ah'm ! I'll allow you three guesses, ma'am.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

On the night we heard of our misfortune we saw you rather—at a disadvantage.

DICK.

Done, first time. I suppose I presented a shocking spectacle.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

H'm ! Well, that's a week ago, Mr. Phenyl. Now, Rome wasn't built in a day, but you can make a new man out of unpromising material in a week—and a new woman too—sometimes. Mr. Phenyl, I'm not the woman I was a week ago—am I ?

DICK.

[Hesitating.] Well——

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[Sharply.] Am I, sir ?

doorway.] Behold ! [Closing the door and advancing to BERTRAM.] How are you, Bertram ? [BERTRAM refuses PHILIP's hand by putting his own behind his back. PHILIP raises his eyebrows.] Oh ? [A pause.] Anything amiss ? [Observing BERTRAM'S heated look.] You don't look well, Filson.

BERTRAM.

[Breathing heavily.] No, I'm not well—I mean t'say, I'm sick with indignation —

PHILIP.

What about ?

BERTRAM.

You've attempted to play us all a rascally trick, Mackworth ; a low, scurvy, contemptible —

PHILIP.

[Frowning.] A trick ?

BERTRAM.

I've just come from Mr. Dunning—a man I've thought it my duty to employ in the interests of my family—Sillitoe and Dunning, the private-inquiry people —

PHILIP.

Private-inquiry people ?

BERTRAM.

Dunning rang me up an hour ago, and I went down to him. The discovery wasn't clinched till this afternoon —

PHILIP.

The discovery ?

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*In a whisper.*] We're not visible, Mr. Phenyl, to anybody.

DICK.

[*Going.*] No, certainly not.

MINNIE.

[*In a whisper.*] We're out, Mr. Phenyl—shopping.

DICK.

[*Drawing the curtain over the opening.*] I should rather think you were.

MINNIE.

[*To DICK.*] Hush !

[DICK disappears behind the curtain and opens the door, while MRS. GILFILLIAN and MINNIE stand listening.]

DICK.

[*At the door.*] How d'ye do ? How d'ye do ?

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*To MINNIE, in a whisper.*] Who is it ?

DICK.

[*Out of sight.*] No—went out shopping about ten minutes ago.

MINNIE.

[*To MRS. GILFILLIAN.*] I don't know.

BERTRAM.

[Walking away.] Oh, it's no use, Mackworth—this air of innocence! [Puffing himself out and strutting to and fro on the left.] It's simply wasted effort, I mean t'say. In five minutes I can have Dunning here with the whole disreputable story. He's close by—bottom of Chancery Lane. He'll be at his office till half-past-eleven —

PHILIP.

[Between his teeth—thrusting his hands into his trouser-pockets.] Very accommodating of him!

BERTRAM.

I tried to get on to my father from Dunning's—to ask his advice, I mean t'say—but he'd dressed early and gone to one of his clubs, and they couldn't tell me which one. [Halting and looking at his watch.] My suggestion is that you and I should struggle through this farce of a dinner as best we can—as if nothing had happened, I mean t'say—and that I should reserve the disclosure of your caddish conduct till tomorrow. You assent to that course, Mackworth? [Dabbing his forehead with his handkerchief.] Thank heaven, the announcement of the engagement hasn't appeared!

PHILIP.

[In a calm voice.] Bertram—[pointing to the chair on the left of the smoking-table] Bertie, old man—[seating himself easily upon the settee on the right] you're your sister's brother and I'm not going to lose my temper —

BERTRAM.

[Sneeringly.] My dear sir —

HORACE.

[*Not seeing MINNIE's signs.*] Yes. I invariably call to inquire after Mr. Wedderburn during the afternoon.

MINNIE.

[*Turning away.*] Oh !

HORACE.

I shall be here again *this* afternoon.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

I haven't heard of your calling at all !

MINNIE.

[*Confused.*] Oh, yes, mamma, Mr. Bream has made the—usual—inquiries during the week, generally while you have been resting. His cards are somewhere.

HORACE.

Oh, yes ; my cards are somewhere.

DR. DELANEY *enters.*

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*Angrily to herself, at HORACE.*] Oh, this man !

[*She goes to DELANEY and they talk together.*

MINNIE.

[*Eyeing HORACE.*] Oh ! now he knows that mamma didn't know. [To HORACE with dignity.] I hope, Mr. Bream, that you will forgive Mr. Phenyl's lack

PHILIP.

[*His hands clenched, but preserving his suavity.*] Extremely grateful to you, Bertie. I see! And so, burdened by these suspicions, you carried them to Mr.—Mr. Gunning?

BERTRAM.

Dunning. I didn't regard it as a job for a respectable solicitor —

PHILIP.

[*Politely.*] Didn't you!

BERTRAM.

Not that there's anything against Dunning —

PHILIP.

[*Uncrossing his legs and sitting upright.*] Well, that brings us to the point, doesn't it?

BERTRAM.

The point?

PHILIP.

The precise, and illuminating, details of the fable your friend at the bottom of Chancery Lane is fooling you with.

BERTRAM.

[*In a pitying tone.*] Oh, my dear Mackworth! I repeat, it's no use your adopting this attitude. You don't realize how completely you're bowled over, I mean t'say. Dunning's got incontestable proofs —

PHILIP.

[*Jumping up, unable to repress himself any longer.*] Damn the impudent scoundrel — ! [The bell rings.]

[Minnie nods to Dr. Delaney, and goes to where Mrs. Gilfillian is sitting, Horace following her.

DR. DELANEY.

[Tapping Dick on the shoulder.] Mr. Phenyl.

DICK.

[Looking up.] Eh?

DR. DELANEY.

[Bending over him.] I fancy there's something worrying Mr. Wedderburn.

DICK.

Well, I should think so!

DR. DELANEY.

What is it?

DICK.

Sixpence in the pound.

DR. DELANEY.

Ah, I mean something not connected with dividends at all. [Drawing Dick a little nearer.] Mr. Phenyl, I hear that Wedderburn has been rambling a little about the woman who used to live downstairs —talking about her in his sleep.

DICK.

Ah, I dare say. His boy is in love with her daughter, and that troubles him.

DR. DELANEY.

So Mrs. Gilfillian explains. But, Mr. Phenyl, doesn't it strike you as rather odd that Mr. Wedder-

PHILIP.

[*Flinging the poker into the grate and facing BERTRAM.*] Confound you, you don't suppose I'm going to act on your suggestion, and grin through a long meal with this between us! [Pointing to the telephone again.] Ring him up, you treacherous little whelp—quick! [Advancing.] If you won't — !

BERTRAM.

[*Bristling.*] Oh, very good! [Pausing on his way to the telephone and addressing PHILIP with an evil expression.] You were always a bully and a blusterer, Mackworth; but, take my word for it, if you fancy you can bully Mr. Dunning, and bluster to my family, with any satisfactory results to yourself, you're vastly mistaken.

PHILIP.

[*Gruffly.*] I beg your pardon; sorry I exploded.

BERTRAM.

[*Scowling.*] It's of no consequence. [At the telephone, his ear to the receiver.] I am absolutely indifferent to your vulgar abuse, I mean t'say.

[JOHN announces ROOPE. Note: ROOPE and the rest of the guests divest themselves of their overcoats, wraps, etc., in the vestibule before entering the room.

JOHN.

Mr. Roope.

ROOPE.

[*Greeting PHILIP as JOHN withdraws.*] Am I the first — ?

PHILIP.

[*Glancing at BERTRAM.*] No.

tory which she confides to another is generally the Index. Now may I ask if the Index in your possession goes down to the letter "W"?

DICK.

[*Sinking into the armchair with his hand to his forehead.*] Wedderburn! Good gracious! The possibility never struck me! Oh!

DR. DELANEY.

But you perceive the possibility?

DICK.

Don't pump me, Dr. Delaney, please! Confound it, you wouldn't ask me to betray a woman's confidence by even a hint!

DR. DELANEY.

Not for the worrlid! [*Taking DICK's hand.*] Besides, afther all, perhaps this is no business of moine. Good morning Mr. Phenyl. [*To himself, as he takes up his hat.*] Now, if my theory is correct, I wonder if I could contrive to do a little good to a miserable man and an unhappy woman by a bold stroke? I'm inclined for the experiment. Mrs. Gilfillian—

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Yes, Doctor?

DR. DELANEY.

[*Taking her hand.*] I've been thinking I shall have you and your pretty daughter on my hands if I don't take better care of ye.

PHILIP.

Yes, the east hasn't exhausted its marvels yet, by a long chalk.

ROOPE.

[*Looking at him curiously.*] Nothing the matter, Phil?

BERTRAM.

[*Suddenly, into the telephone.*] That you, Dunning — ?

PHILIP.

[*To ROOPE.*] Robbie —

[*Turning to the fire, PHILIP talks rapidly and energetically to ROOPE in undertones.*

BERTRAM.

[*Into the telephone.*] Filson. . . . Mr. Filson. . . . I'm speaking from Gray's Inn. . . . Gray's Inn—Mr. Mackworth's chambers—2, Friars Court. . . . You're wanted, Dunning. . . . Now—immediately. . . . Yes, jump into a taxicab and come up, will you? . . .

ROOPE.

[*To PHILIP, aloud, opening his eyes widely.*] My dear Phil — !

PHILIP.

[*With a big laugh.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha — !

BERTRAM.

[*To PHILIP, angrily.*] Quiet! I can't hear. [*Into the telephone.*] I can't hear; there's such a beastly noise going on—what? . . . Dash it, you can get something to eat at any time! I mean to say—! . . . Eh? . . . [*Irritably.*] Oh, of course you may have a wash and brush

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

I'll go to a Registry Office at once and hire a handy girl, if there's one in London. I won't have that degraded woman McOstrich in these rooms again. [Turning sharply, she sees MINNIE and HORACE close together.] Minnie!

[HORACE leaves MINNIE quickly, and thrusts himself half out of the window.

MINNIE.

Mamma !

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[Severely.] When Mr Bream has terminated his visit, perhaps in this hour of emergency you will remember there is such a place as the pantry.

[MRS. GILFILLIAN goes into DICK's room, which she is now occupying. MINNIE looks towards HORACE, whose body is half out of the window, then at DICK, then at her hands.

MINNIE.

[Sighing.] Washing up is awfully trying for one's hands.

DICK.

I'll help—shall I ?

MINNIE.

What a good-natured man you are, Mr. Phenyl ! I'm so sorry I scolded you.

DICK.

Delighted.

ROOPE.

[*Uneasily.*] Er—I am rather an interloper, I'm afraid, my dear Sir Randle —

SIR RANDLE.

[*Retaining his hand.*] No. [*Emphatically.*] No. This is one of Philip's many happy inspirations. If my memory is accurate, it was at your charming flat in South Audley Street that he and my darling child — [*Discovering BERTRAM, who is now by the settee on the left.*] Bertie! [*Going to him.*] I haven't seen you all day, Bertie dear. [*Kissing him on the forehead.*] Busy, eh?

BERTRAM.

[*Stiffly.*] Yes, father.

PHILIP.

[*At the chair on the left of the smoking-table, dryly.*] Bertram has been telling me how busy he has been, Sir Randle —

SIR RANDLE.

[*Not perceiving the general air of restraint.*] That reminds me—[*moving, full of importance, to the settee on the right—feeling in his breast-pocket*] the announcement of the engagement, Philip—[*seating himself and producing a pocketbook*] Lady Filson and I drew it up this morning. [*Hunting among some letters and papers.*] I believe it is in the conventional form; but we so thoroughly sympathize with you and Ottoline in your dislike for anything that savors of pomp and flourish that we hesitate, without your sanction, to—[*selecting a paper and handing it to PHILIP*] ah! [*To ROOPE, who has returned to the fireplace—over his shoulder.*] I am treating you as one of ourselves, Mr. Roope —

MINNIE.

Flutter!

DICK.

Toss up a coin.

MINNIE.

[*Glancing towards HORACE with dignity.*] Oh no, thank you, I couldn't do that. [*Seeing HORACE is still leaning out of the window.*] Be quick, I don't mind.

DICK.

[*Producing a penny.*] Now, then, Britannia washes, and the Queen wipes. [*Throwing up a coin, and catching it smartly—to himself.*] I'm really very much better. [To MINNIE.] Miss Gilfillian—sudden death —you cry.

MINNIE.

What?

DICK.

[*Solemnly.*] Sudden death—you cry.

MINNIE.

Oh, how unkind of you to suggest such things when Uncle Geoffrey is so unwell.

DICK.

You misunderstand me! I mean, you guess—head or tail.

MINNIE.

[*With dignity.*] Oh, head, please.

DICK.

[*Referring to his coin.*] Woman—you wash,

popular—the widely and deservedly popular Sir Randle and Lady Filson —”

[*After reading it to the end silently, he restores the paper to SIR RANDLE with a smile and a slight bow.*]

SIR RANDLE.

[*Collecting himself.*] Er—Lady Filson and I thought it might be prudent, Philip, to—er—to give a lead to the inevitable comments of the press. [*Replacing the paper in his pocketbook.*] If you object, my dear boy —

PHILIP.

[*With a motion of the head towards the vestibule door.*] That must be Lady Filson and Ottoline.

[*He goes to the door and opens it. LADY FILSON and OTTOLINE are in the vestibule and JOHN is taking LADY FILSON'S wrap from her.*]

LADY FILSON.

[*Brimming over with good humor.*] Ah, Philip! Don't say we're late!

PHILIP.

[*Lightly.*] I won't.

LADY FILSON.

[*Entering and shaking hands with him.*] Your staircase is so dark, it takes an age to climb it. [*To ROOPE, who comes forward, shaking hands with him.*] How nice! Ottoline told me, coming along, that we were to meet you.

ROOPE.

[*Bending over her hand.*] Dear lady!

HORACE.

Hallo! Why, *she* must have thrown this! Ah, how playful she is at times. I bear no ill-will towards Mrs. Gilfillian, but what a gay, high-spirited girl Minnie would be if she were a thoroughly qualified orphan. [Looking round.] I guess she's hiding around here somewhere.

[MINNIE appears in the passage opening, wiping a cup. She peeps into the room and comes face to face with HORACE.]

HORACE.

[Triumphantly holding up the ball of wool.] Ha! Ha! You imagined I didn't see you throw this, but I did.

MINNIE.

[Coldly.] I! Really, Mr. Bream! Excuse me, I'm occupied in the pantry.

HORACE.

May I join you in the pantry?

MINNIE.

Oh, no, certainly not; but if you'll wait here, mamma won't be long.

[She retires, drawing the curtain over the opening.]

HORACE.

[Angrily.] Mamma! Mamma! I am becoming desperate. I can't sleep—I can't eat—I can't live on anything but hope, and this girl is just starving me.

the chair by the smoking-table and prepares to make himself agreeable to LADY FILSON.] Share it with me, Dad, and let me warm my toes before dinner. I'm frozen !

PHILIP.

[*Coming to the middle of the room.*] My dear Ottoline—Lady Filson—Sir Randle—I fear we shall *all* have time to warm our toes before dinner. [ROOPE, who is about to address a remark to LADY FILSON, puts his hand to his mouth, and SIR RANDLE and LADY FILSON look at PHILIP inquiringly.] You mustn't blame me wholly for the hitch in my poor entertainment —

LADY FILSON.

[*Amiably.*] The kitchen ! I guess your difficulties, Philip —

PHILIP.

No, nor my kitchen either —

OTTOLINE.

[*Turning the chair on the nearer side of the fireplace so that it faces the fire.*] The cook wasn't punctual ! [*Installing herself in the chair.*] Ah, la, la ! Ces cuisinières causent la moitié des ennuis sur cette terre !

PHILIP.

Oh, yes, the cook was punctual. [*His manner hardening a little.*] The truth is, we are waiting for a Mr. Dunning.

LADY FILSON.

Mr. — ?

SIR RANDLE.

Mr. — ?

MINNIE.

An acquaintance.

HORACE.

No—a lover.

MINNIE.

Mr. Bream—sir !

HORACE.

[*Emphatically.*] I repeat, a lover—a lover—a lover.
There, I've said it.

MINNIE.

Having said it, will you allow me to carry out the
tray ?

HORACE.

Permit me ? [He takes the tray and places it on the
table. She passes him, and is going out when he turns
quickly, and taking her hand draws her back into the
room.] That's not fair. You must say Yes to-day,
or—I—

MINNIE.

Or you start for New York next Saturday—I
know. You were going to start for New York next
Saturday when we first met you, months ago, if you
remember.

HORACE.

Remember ! My heart keeps a diary in red ink.
Why don't you like me, Minnie ?

MINNIE.

How unjust ! I like you as much as I can ever
like—any foreigner.

HORACE.

Foreigner !

whereupon PHILIP, after watching their departure, deliberately closes the big doors. ROOPE, who has been picking at his nails nervously, rises and steals away to the left, and SIR RANDLE, advancing a step or two, exchanges questioning glances with LADY FILSON.

OTTOLINE.

[*Laughingly.*] What a terrible shock! I was frightened that Philip had sprung a strange guest upon us.
[As PHILIP is shutting the doors.] *Vous êtes bien mystérieux, Phil?* Why are we to starve until this Mr. Dunning has come and gone?

PHILIP.

Because if I tried to eat without having first disposed of the reptile, Otto, I should choke.

LADY FILSON.

[*Bewildered.*] Reptile?

OTTOLINE.

Philip!

PHILIP.

[*At the chair beside the smoking-table—to LADY FILSON.*] I apologize very humbly for making you and Sir Randle, and dear Ottoline, parties to such unpleasant proceedings, Lady Filson; but the necessity is forced upon me.
[*Coming forward.*] Mr. Dunning is one of those crawling creatures who conduct what are known as confidential inquiries. In other words, he's a private detective—an odd sort of person to present to you! —

LADY FILSON.

[*Under her breath.*] Great heavens!

MINNIE.

And this is my reward for not disturbing mamma !
Only an American would throw stairs in a girl's face.

HORACE.

Miss Gilfillian, you are like the typical English gentleman who says, " Give me a home-made watch " ! Nobody does give it to him, but he pays sixty guineas for one, has his crest carved on it, and is borne down on one side with the weight of it for years. When it is not being cleaned, it enables him to lose his train. At last it is stolen from him in a crowd—so he swears a little, buys a cheap American timepiece, and lives happily. Miss Gilfillian, perhaps some day when you have won and worn your home-made husband you'll give a thought to the cheap but reliable American who has now the honour to wish you good-bye.

MINNIE.

I—I shall not say good-bye, or anything, after such—unkindness. To—to—to be called a flirt ! A flirt ! Oh, dear, it's so hard !

[*She takes up the tray from the table and backs towards HORACE, who suddenly puts his arm round her waist.*

HORACE.

Ah, forgive me !

MINNIE.

Forgive you ! After such a cruel charge ! Remove you arm, Mr. Bream !

upon BERTRAM, crosses the room at the back.] So what does he do, bless him for his devotion to his belongings! To safeguard his parents from being jockeyed, and as a brotherly precaution, he enlists the services, on the sly, of the obliging Mr. Dunning. We shall shortly have an opportunity of judging what that individual's game is. [With a shrug.] He may have stumbled legitimately into a mare's nest; but I doubt it. These ruffians'll stick at nothing to keep an ingenuous client on the hook — [He is interrupted by feeling OTTOLINE'S hand upon his arm. He lays his hand on hers gently.] Otto dear —

OTTOLINE.

[*Clutching him lightly and articulating with an effort.*] It—it's infamous—shameful! My—my brother! It's infamous!

PHILIP.

Oh, it'll be all over in ten minutes. And then Bertie and I will shake hands—won't we, Bertie?—and forget the wretched incident —

OTTOLINE.

[*Confronting BERTRAM, trembling with passion.*] How dare you! How dare you meddle with my affairs—mine and Mr. Mackworth's! How dare you!

BERTRAM.

[*Straightening himself.*] Look heah, Ottoline — !

OTTOLINE.

Stand up when I speak to you!

[*BERTRAM gets to his feet in a hurry.*

LADY FILSON.

[*Appealingly.*] Otto — !

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*To herself.*] That young man still here. [To HORACE.] Mr. Bream, I shall be much obliged if you'll give me your arm across the Strand.

HORACE.

Certainly! It will be the last opportunity I shall have of rendering you even so slight a service.

[MINNIE turns, listening.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Indeed!

HORACE.

I start for N' York—[emphatically]—on Wednesday.
[MINNIE gives a stifled exclamation.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

We're very sorry—though, perhaps, you have been wasting your time rather sadly.

HORACE.

That notion has just struck me. Please say farewell for me to everybody. [MINNIE looks at him wistfully.] And tell Mr. Wedderburn that I have called every day this past week—[looking at MINNIE]—solely to inquire after him.

[MINNIE retreats to the window-seat.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[Dubiously.] Um! I'm quite ready, Mr. Bream.
[She goes out.

LADY FILSON.

[*To BERTRAM.*] Bertie dear, I'm surprised at you !
To do a thing like this behind our backs !

BERTRAM.

My dear mother, I knew that you and father wouldn't
do it —

LADY FILSON.

I should think not, indeed !

SIR RANDLE.

[*To BERTRAM.*] Your mother and I !

LADY FILSON.

[*Horrified at the notion.*] Oh !

BERTRAM.

Upon my word, this is rather rough ! [*Walking away.*]
I mean to say — /

PHILIP.

[*Turning.*] We mustn't be too hard on poor Bertram,
Lady Filson —

BERTRAM.

[*Pacing the room near the big doors.*] Poor Bertram !
Ho !

SIR RANDLE.

[*To PHILIP.*] I trust we are never unduly hard on our
children, my dear Philip —

PHILIP.

To do him justice, he was most anxious to postpone
these dreadful revelations till to-morrow —

out me—Horace." [Rising with the note in her hand.] Give me something heavy, to weight this! [Snatching the spoon from DICK.] That'll do.

DICK.

Eh?

[She screws up the spoon in the paper and runs up to the window.

MINNIE.

[Looking out of the window.] Ah! [Calling softly.] Horace! Horace!

[She throws out the spoon and paper.

DICK.

[To himself.] That spoon belonged to my poor mother.

MINNIE.

[Withdrawing from the window hastily.] Oh! Mamma's got it.

DICK.

Glad to hear it.

MINNIE.

Oh, Mr. Phenyl, run after Mr. Bream!

DICK.

[Catching up his hat.] Certainly. [Giving her the cloth he carries.] You go on with the wiping. What shall I say?

MINNIE.

Say I want him to inquire after Uncle Geoffrey as usual.

OTTOLINE.

Why—why should you stoop to see him at all? Why shouldn't the matter be allowed to drop—to drop?

PHILIP.

Drop!

OTTOLINE.

It—it's too monstrous; too absurd. [To BERTRAM, with a laugh.] Ha, ha, ha! Bertie—Bertie dear—

BERTRAM.

[Sullenly.] Yes?

OTTOLINE.

Ha, ha! I almost scared you out of your wits, didn't I?

BERTRAM.

You've behaved excessively rudely—

LADY FILSON.

Bertram—Bertram—

BERTRAM.

I mean to say, mother! What becomes of family loyalty—?

OTTOLINE.

[To BERTRAM, coaxingly.] Forgive me, Bertram. I'm ashamed of my violent outburst. Forgive me—

ROOPE.

[Who has been effacing himself behind the table on the left, appearing at the nearer end of the table.] Er—dear excellent friends—[SIR RANDLE and LADY FILSON look at ROOPE as if he had fallen from the skies, and BER-

the door! [DICK goes to the door and closes it. MINNIE places LAVENDER in the armchair, and removes her hat.] Oh, poor Clement! How happy he will be! How happy he will be!

DICK.

[*Returning breathlessly.*] I was about to put a question to you, Lavvy. Where have you come from? Where are you——?

MINNIE.

Oh, hush, Mr. Phenyl! Lavender will tell me. [*Tenderly.*] Where have you come from, dear?

DICK.

My question!

LAVENDER.

[*Faintly.*] I've come from Miss Morrison's School at Highgate, where mother took me when we left here. I—I've run away, Miss Gilfillian.

DICK.

Run away!

MINNIE.

Hush, Mr. Phenyl!

DICK.

Yes, but run away!

MINNIE.

Be quiet!

DICK.

Run away!

PHILIP.

[*Turning away, angrily.*] Oh — — !

LADY FILSON.

[*Severely.*] Bertie — — !

SIR RANDLE.

Bertram, my boy — — !

[*The bell rings. There is a short silence, and then BERTRAM rises and pulls down his waistcoat portentously.*

BERTRAM.

Here he is.

OTTOLINE.

[*To LADY FILSON, in a low voice.*] Mother — — ?

LADY FILSON.

[*To PHILIP.*] Do you wish us to withdraw, Philip?

PHILIP.

[*Sitting at the writing-table.*] Not at all, Lady Filson.
[*Switching on the light of the library-lamp, sternly.*] On the contrary, I should like you both to remain.

LADY FILSON.

[*To OTTOLINE.*] Otto dear — — ?

OTTOLINE.

[*Adjusting a comb in her hair.*] Oh, certainly, mother, I'll stay.

LADY FILSON.

[*Arranging her skirt and settling herself majestically.*] Of this we may be perfectly sure; when my son finds that he has been misled, purposely or unintentionally, he will be only too ready—*too ready* —

who lent me the paper and the envelope told Miss Morrison, who scolded me dreadfully. But I got out of the house. If it had been a prison, Miss Gilfillian, I should have got out, now that Mr. Hale is in trouble.

DICK.

Here's a pretty kettle o' fish ! You know you'll have to be sent back, Lavvy.

MINNIE.

Nothing of the kind.

LAVENDER.

I'll go back when I've seen him for five minutes.

MINNIE.

[*Indignantly.*] Mr. Phenyl, you're positively heartless !

DICK.

[*Piteously.*] Heartless ! I heartless ! You don't know what I know. I mean, I'm a man ; you're only a couple of girls—a girl and a half I may say. [With his hand to his head.] Oh ! where's Ruth's secret going to now !

MINNIE.

I admire your spirit, Lavender, if Mr. Phenyl doesn't.

LAVENDER.

Ah, I've no spirit at all, Miss Gilfillian. [MINNIE takes her in her arms and caresses her.] But mother hid me away because I was too poor and humble for Mr. Hale—and so I was a week ago. . But now

DUNNING.

[*To SIR RANDLE and LADY FILSON.*] Evening.

BERTRAM.

My sister, Madame de Chaumié —

DUNNING.

[*To OTTOLINE.*] Evening.

BERTRAM.

Mr. Roope—Mr. Mackworth —

DUNNING.

[*To them.*] Evening.

[SIR RANDLE, LADY FILSON, and ROOPE, looking at DUNNING out of the corners of their eyes, acknowledge the introduction by a slight movement. PHILIP nods unpleasantly. OTTOLINE, with a stony countenance, also eyes DUNNING askance, and gives the barest possible inclination of her head on being named.

BERTRAM.

[*Bringing forward the chair on which he has been sitting and planting it nearer to SIR RANDLE and LADY FILSON — to DUNNING.*] I suppose you may —

DUNNING.

[*Taking off his gloves and overcoat — to PHILIP.*] D'ye mind if I slip my coat off, Mr. Mackworth ?

PHILIP.

[*Growling.*] No.

DUNNING.

Don't want to get overheated, and catch the flue. I've got Mrs. D. in bed with a bad cold, as it is,

DICK.

[*Putting his arm round LAVENDER.*] I quite agree with you, Miss Gilfillian—a friend.

MINNIE.

[*Putting her arm round LAVENDER.*] A protector.

DICK.

Yes, somebody who wasn't born two or three weeks ago.

MINNIE.

I'm of age.

DICK.

Well, look at me.

MINNIE.

But you're not a woman !

DICK.

As it happens—as it happens !

[*A gong bell is heard striking twice.*

MINNIE.

[*To DICK, triumphantly.*] Ha ! ha ! Uncle Wedderburn's bell—twice ! It's for you to read the newspaper.

LAVENDER.

[*Frightened.*] Is Mr. Wedderburn here ?

MINNIE.

[*Gaily.*] Yes, we're all here. Run along, Mr. Phenyl.

tion that, as far as his firm was concerned, the book wasn't doing anything out of the ordinary. [Repeating the thumb process.] I then proceeded to pump one of the gals—er—to interrogate one of the assistants—at a circulating library Mrs. D. subscribes to, with a similar result. [Turning to the next leaf.] My next step —

SIR RANDLE.

I wonder whether these elaborate preliminaries — ?

BERTRAM.

Oh, don't interrupt, father! I mean to say — !

DUNNING.

[Imperturbably.] My next step was to place the book in the hands of a lady whose literary judgment is a great deal sounder than mine or Mr. Sillitoe's—I allude to Mrs. D.—and her report was that, though amusing in parts, she didn't see anything in it to set the Thames on fire.

PHILIP.

[Laughing in spite of himself.] Ha, ha, ha!

ROOPE.

Ha, ha! [To PHILIP, with mock sympathy.] Dear excellent friend!

BERTRAM.

[To ROOPE.] Yes, all right, Mr. Roope — !

DUNNING.

[Turning to the next leaf.] I and Mr. Sillitoe then had another confab—er—consultation with Mr. Filson, and we pointed out to him that it was up to his father and mother to challenge Titterton's assertions and invite proof of their accuracy.

MINNIE.

A fellow-feeling. I'm unhappy in my love, too.

LAVENDER.

[Putting her arms round MINNIE's neck.] Oh! Tell me.

MINNIE.

He's Mr. Bream. I said "No" to him, and he believed me, in a foolish American way he has.

LAVENDER.

Oh, we ought always to speak the truth. Why, directly Clement asked me, I said "Yes."

MINNIE.

Well, Lavvy, at a big dinner the sweets are always brought round twice, and I thought—I thought—
[Whispering.] I'm a wretched girl.

LAVENDER.

[Affectionately.] Don't cry! Don't cry!

MINNIE.

I forgot that if the sweets do come round again, other ladies have been digging spoons in.

LAVENDER.

Is he far away?

MINNIE.

Yes—he's in the Strand now.

LAVENDER.

Let us go after him with Clement.

PHILIP.

[*Patting her shoulder soothingly.*] Tsch, tsch, tsch — !

BERTRAM.

[*To LADY FILSON and SIR RANDLE.*] My dear mother—my dear father—you're so impatient !

PHILIP.

[*To OTTOLINE.*] Tsch, tsch ! Go back to the fire and toast your toes again.

BERTRAM.

I consider I was fully justified, I mean t'say —

[*Falteringly OTTOLINE returns to the fireplace. She stands there for a few seconds, clutching the mantel-shelf, and then subsides into the chair before the fire.* PHILIP advances to the settee on the right.]

PHILIP.

[*To DUNNING.*] Sorry we have checked your flow of eloquence, Mr. Dunning, even for a moment. [*Sitting.*] I wouldn't miss a syllable of it. [Airily.] Do, please, continue.

SIR RANDLE.

[*Looking at his watch.*] My dear Philip — !

BERTRAM.

[*To DUNNING, wearily.*] Oh, come to the man—what's his name, Dunning ?—Merryweather — !

DUNNING.

[*Turning several pages of his note-book with his wet thumb.*] Merrifield.

WEDDERBURN.

[*Seeing MINNIE.*] Ah, Minnie, my dear !

MINNIE.

[*Going to him.*] Why, uncle !

WEDDERBURN.

[*Patting her cheek.*] Ah, I can't submit to be nursed and cosseted any longer. I—I—shall go down to Barnchester to-morrow to face the people, and—and to see about other things. [*Seeing LAVENDER.*] Who's that young lady, my dear ?

MINNIE.

[*Bringing LAVENDER forward.*] This is—a friend of mine, uncle.

[*WEDDERBURN holds out his hand. LAVENDER puts her hand in his, timidly.*

WEDDERBURN.

I'm very glad to see Minnie's friend.

LAVENDER.

[*With a curtsey.*] Thank you, sir.

WEDDERBURN.

I've been rather ill, my dear, but the doctor says I may go into the gardens while the sun is out. Will you walk on one side of me, with Minnie on the other ?

LAVENDER.

I—I would, sir—if my mother would let me.

SIR RANDLE.

Yes, what have Messrs. Hopwood — ?

BERTRAM.

[Over his shoulder.] Ho ! What have Messrs. Hopwood — !

ROOPE.

[To BERTRAM, pointing to DUNNING.] I am addressing this gentleman, dear excellent friend —

DUNNING.

[To ROOPE.] I'll tell you, sir. [Incisively.] It's to the bogus firm of Hopwood & Co. that the bulk of the volumes of Mr. Mackworth's new book have been consigned.

BERTRAM.

[Getting off the table, eagerly.] Dunning has seen them, I mean t'say —

SIR RANDLE.

[To BERTRAM, startled.] Be silent, Bertie !

LADY FILSON.

[To BERTRAM, holding her breath.] Do be quiet !

ROOPE.

[Blankly.] The—the bulk of the volumes — ?

PHILIP.

[Staring at DUNNING.] The—the bulk of the — ?

DUNNING.

[To SIR RANDLE and ROOPE.] Yes, gentlemen, the books are in a mouldy cellar, also rented by Messrs. Hopwood at 6, Carmichael Lane. There's thousands

on Wedderburn's neglect of his business rather taxes my imagination. Ready, sir?

WEDDERBURN.

Yes, yes, Mr. Richard.

DICK.

H'm! [To himself.] Hallo! Here is a short leader. [Reading.] "It will not be difficult to find an excuse for Mr. Wedderburn's ignorance of the affairs of the bank."

WEDDERBURN.

[Eagerly.] Ah! That's good—that's just.

DICK.

[To himself.] It will be difficult, they say here. Wonderful what a word does. [There is a rat-tat-tat at the outer door. Laying down the paper.] Excuse me.

WEDDERBURN.

[To himself.] It will not be difficult to find an excuse for Mr. Wedderburn—an excuse for Mr. Wedderburn.

[DICK opens the door. DR. DELANEY and RUTH, dressed as a nurse, but veiled, are outside.

DR. DELANEY.

Thank ye, Mr. Phenyl. Thank ye. [Cheerily, pointing to WEDDERBURN.] Come, now, look at that!

SIR RANDLE.

[*Alertly.*] Quite so! Surely, if we were to be deceived, a simpler method could have been found —?

ROOPE.

[*With energy.*] Besides, what has Mr. Titterton to gain by the deception?

SIR RANDLE.

True! True! What has *he* to gain —?

PHILIP.

[*Who is sitting with his hands hanging loosely, utterly bewildered—rousing himself.*] Good God, yes! What has Titterton to gain by joining me in a blackguardly scheme to—to—to —?

DUNNING.

[*To SIR RANDLE and ROOPE.*] Well, gentlemen, in the first place, it's plain that Titterton was too fly to risk being easily blown upon —

BERTRAM.

He was prepared to prove that the books *have been* manufactured and delivered, I mean t'say —

DUNNING.

And in the second place, on the question of expense, the speculation was a tolerably safe one.

LADY FILSON.

[*Keenly.*] Speculation?

DUNNING.

Madarme dee Showmeeay being, according to my instructions—[*to LADY FILSON, after a glance in OTTOLINE'S direction*] no offence, ladies—[*to SIR RANDLE and ROOPE*]

WEDDERBURN.

[*In a whisper.*] Who is it?

RUTH.

Ruth.

WEDDERBURN.

Ruth—Ruth!

RUTH.

I am the nurse that Dr. Delaney speaks of. Do you wish me to remain, Mr. Wedderburn?

WEDDERBURN.

[*With an effort, in a low voice.*] Yes, Ruth.

[*He sinks back into his chair, staring forward.*
She removes her bonnet and cloak.

DR. DELANEY.

[*Softly to DICK.*] That's all right. [*Aloud.*] I'll be with ye again in ten minutes, Wedderburn.
[*Nudging DICK.*] A delicate, but successful experiment. Come, I'll tell ye how I put the pieces of the puzzle together.

[DICK and DELANEY go into the other room.

RUTH.

If Mr. Phenyl was reading to you, shall I take his place?

WEDDERBURN.

[*Passing his hand across his brow.*] You are merciful to me, Ruth. You come to me when I am ill, broken, in misfortune.

Lady Filson—Sir Randle—you don't believe that Titterton and I could be guilty of such an arrant piece of knavery, do you? Ho, ho, ho! It's preposterous.

SIR RANDLE.

[Constrainedly.] Frankly—I must be frank—I hardly know *what* to believe.

LADY FILSON.

[Pursing her mouth.] We—we hardly know *what* to believe.

PHILIP.

[Leaving them.] Ah — !

ROOPE.

[Who has dropped into the chair by the smoking-table—to SIR RANDLE.] Sir Randle—dear excellent friend—let us meet Mr. Dunning to-morrow at Messrs. Hopwood's in Carmichael Lane—we three—you and I and Mackworth —

PHILIP.

[Pacing up and down between the table on the left and the bookcase.] Yes, yes—before I wire to Titterton—or see Curtis, his manager —

ROOPE.

[Over his shoulder, to DUNNING.] Hey, Mr. Dunning?

DUNNING.

Pleasure.

[While this has been going on, DUNNING has put his note-book away and risen, gathering up his hat and overcoat as he does so. BERTRAM is now assisting him into his coat.

betrayed and broke my promise to, eighteen years since. I have never forgotten the time when you asked me if I was ashamed of the poor girl who hung upon my arm in the lanes about Barnchester, and the answer I gave you. Your look of shame and reproach as you left me has been always with me, and it was the ghost of that look which struck me down here, a week ago.

[*Burying his face in his handkerchief.*

RUTH.

You've been too hard upon yourself, Mr. Wedderburn. You were right—I was not a fit wife for you. And now we are growing old! Forget it and suffer no more.

[*She breaks down and leans her head upon the back of the chair, weeping.*

WEDDERBURN.

But why talk of my sufferings, Ruth? What have yours been?

RUTH.

Less than I deserved—because you know, sir, Heaven had mercy upon me, and consoled me.

WEDDERBURN.

Ah! I remember. They call you Mrs. Rolt here—you were Ruth Rawdon at Barnchester. You are a widow, with a daughter whom Clement has become attached to. I remember.

[*She goes back a step or two, staring at him.*

BERTRAM.

And pokes about in the cellar —

DUNNING.

Calls himself Hopwood. But the name written on the lining of his hat—[to BERTRAM, carelessly] oh, I forgot to mention this to you, Mr. Filson. [Producing his memorandum-book again.] Old mother Sweasy was examining the young man's outdoor apparel the other day. [Turning the pages with his wet thumb.] The name on the lining of his hat is—[finding the entry] is "Westrip." "Leonard Westrip."

BERTRAM.

Westrip?

SIR RANDLE.

Leonard—Westrip?

LADY FILSON.

Mr. Westrip!

SIR RANDLE.

[To DUNNING, blinking.] Mr. Westrip is my secretary.

BERTRAM.

[To DUNNING, agape.] He's my father's secretary.

DUNNING.

[To SIR RANDLE.] Your seckert'ry?

PHILIP.

[Coming to the nearer end of the settee on the left.] The—the—the fair boy I've seen in Ennismore Gardens!

pared to what I flung away eighteen years ago—the love of a faithful woman.

LAVENDER enters with MINNIE, both dressed for going out.

RUTH.

Lavender !

LAVENDER.

[Going to RUTH.] Mother, dear mother, don't be angry with me ! Mother !

WEDDERBURN.

[In a whisper to himself, sinking into the arm-chair.] My child !

CLEMENT enters hurriedly.

MINNIE.

[Running up to him.] Clement ! Look here !

[LAVENDER goes to CLEMENT and clings to him.]

CLEMENT.

Lavender ! Mrs. Rolt !

LAVENDER.

Ah, Clement !

DICK and DR. DELANEY enter.

LAVENDER.

[Passionately.] Mother ! I read that Mr. Hale had become poor, and I came here this morning to

OTTOLINE.

[Steadying herself by resting her finger-tips upon the table.] The—the explanation is that Mr. Westrip—[with a wan smile] poor boy—he would jump into the sea for me if I bade him—the explanation is that Mr. Westrip has been—helping me —

LADY FILSON.

Helping you — ?

SIR RANDLE.

Helping you — ?

OTTOLINE.

[Inclining her head.] Helping me. He—he — [Raising her eyes defiantly and confronting them all.] Ecoutez ! Robbie Roope has asked who is the actual tenant of the cellar and room in Carmichael Lane. [Breathing deeply.] I am.

LADY FILSON.

[Advancing a few steps.] You are ! N-n-nonsense !

OTTOLINE.

Mr. Westrip took the place for me—my arrangement with Titterton made it necessary —

LADY FILSON.

With Titterton ! Then he—he *has* — ?

OTTOLINE.

Yes. The thousands of copies—packed in the cases with the lying labels—I have bought them—they're mine —

LADY FILSON.

Y-y-yours !

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

Good gracious me ! Why, Mrs. Rolt, you're surely not the nurse Dr. Delaney promised us ?

DR. DELANEY.

[*Going to MRS. GILFILLIAN and taking her hands.*] Mee dear lady, with the acuteness which is your characteristic, you've hit it. Mrs. Rolt came into my beautiful Home a week ago. She didn't wish it known, and it was no business of moine to divulge it. But when I wanted to preserve the roses in your own cheeks, ma'am, it was Mrs. Rolt who volunteered to help in a work for which all humanity should be grateful.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[*To RUTH, shaking hands with her.*] Well, I'm sure I'm much obliged to Mrs. Rolt. [*Looking round and discovering LAVENDER.*] Why, here's your daughter !

DR. DELANEY.

Oh, yes, ma'am, we allow beautiful flowers in a sick room—[*pointing to the window*]—if you keep the window open.

RUTH.

[*Falteringly.*] I—I did my best. Lavender has been away—at school.

DR. DELANEY.

But the poor little thing chirrups for her mother —hen and chick, ma'am.

BERTRAM.

[*To DUNNING, in the same way.*] Awful. [Opening the outer door.] I—I'll see you in the m-m-morning.

DUNNING.

Pleasure. [*Raising his voice.*] Evening, ladies and gentlemen.

LADY FILSON.

[*Again sitting on the settee on the left, also searching for her handkerchief.*] G-g-good-night.

SIR RANDLE.

[*Weakly.*] Good-night.

ROOPE.

[*Who has wandered to the bookcase like a man in a trance.*] Good-night.

[DUNNING disappears, and BERTRAM closes the outer door and comes back into the room. Shutting the vestibule door, he sinks into the chair lately vacated by DUNNING. There is a silence, broken at length by a low, grating laugh from PHILIP.

PHILIP.

Ha, ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha —— !

LADY FILSON.

[*Dolefully.*] Oh, Ottoline—Ottoline —— !

PHILIP.

Ha, ha, ha —— !

bestows upon her. Lavender, my dear, come here. [Taking her hand as she comes to him timidly.] Lavender, you will be my boy's wife, so you must try to forgive my old unkindness to your mother, and learn to call me father.

[He draws her to him and kisses her. Then RUTH takes LAVENDER aside.

CLEMENT.

[To WEDDERBURN.] Ah, dad, didn't I describe her faithfully? Isn't she sweet and good?

WEDDERBURN.

Yes, Clement; but, Clara, what are we to say to Minnie?

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[Testily.] There, don't talk about Minnie! I wash my hands of her and everybody else. It appears I know nothing about anyone or anything. I ought to have been buried years ago. As for my daughter, she throws a letter out of a window addressed to a gentleman—it falls into my hands, and I, having left my spectacles at home, actually ask that very gentleman to read it. Don't talk to me, anybody.

MINNIE.

Don't be sorry about me, Uncle Geoffrey. Of course, I've been **very** fond of Clem for many years, but—I'm engaged to Mr. Bream now.

WEDDERBURN.

To Mr. Bream?

her family, my dear Philip—by this—I must be harsh—
by this unladylike transaction —

LADY FILSON.

I have never felt so ashamed in my life !

SIR RANDLE.

[To PHILIP.] By-and-by I shall be better able to command language in which to express my profound regret.
[Offering his hand.] For the present—good-night, and God bless you !

PHILIP.

[Shaking SIR RANDLE's hand mechanically.] Good-night.

[As SIR RANDLE turns away, LADY FILSON comes to PHILIP. BERTRAM, having helped OTTOLINE with her cloak, now brings LADY FILSON's wrap from the vestibule. SIR RANDLE takes it from him, and BERTRAM then returns to the vestibule and puts on his overcoat.

LADY FILSON.

[To PHILIP, who rises.] You must have us to dinner another time, Philip. If I eat a crust to-night it will be as much as I shall manage. [Speaking lower, with genuine feeling.] Oh, my dear boy, don't be too cast down—over your clever book, I mean ! [Taking him by the shoulders.] It's a cruel disappointment for you—and you don't deserve it. May I — ? [She pulls him to her and kisses him.] Good-night.

PHILIP.

[Gratefully.] Good-night.

[LADY FILSON leaves PHILIP and looks about for

Bank. [To DICK, who is walking away.] Ah, don't go, Mr. Phenyl, please !

DICK.

[Coming to MAW, uneasily.] Awfully busy—back in five minutes.

MAW.

[Holding his arm.] No, no. The principal creditors, animated by the example of one of their number, have resolved to put Wedderburn's Bank upon its legs again—with every prospect of restoring confidence, sir, and discharging its old responsibilities.

WEDDERBURN.

Mr. Maw !

MAW.

And who do you think has turned the tide of Barnchester opinion in your favour, sir ? [Pointing to DICK.] Mr. Phenyl, who has formally acquitted the Bank of the liability of the amount of the late Mr. Vipont's fortune.

WEDDERBURN.

Richard ! [DICK comes to WEDDERBURN, who takes his hand, and sinks back into the armchair. RUTH comes quickly to WEDDERBURN.]

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

[Throwing her arms round DICK's neck.] Oh, Mr. Phenyl !

DICK.

[Uncomfortably.] Thank you—thank you.

LADY FILSON.

[*Half in the room and half in the vestibule—to ROOPE, remembering his existence.*] Oh, good-night, Mr. Roope!

ROOPE.

Good-night, dear Lady Filson.

SIR RANDLE.

[*In the vestibule.*] Good-night, Mr. Roope.

ROOPE.

Good-night. Good-night, dear excellent friends.

LADY FILSON.

[*To OTTOLINE, who is lingering by the big doors.*] Ottoline —

[LADY FILSON and BERTRAM join SIR RANDLE in the vestibule and SIR RANDLE opens the outer door. PHILIP, his hands behind him and his chin on his breast, has walked to the fireplace and is standing there looking fixedly into the fire. OTTOLINE slowly comes forward and fingers the back of the chair by the smoking-table.

OTTOLINE.

Good-night, Philip.

[He turns to her, makes her a stiff, formal bow, and faces the fire again.

ROOPE.

[Advancing to her—under his breath.] Oh — !

OTTOLINE.

[Giving him her hand.] Ah ! [With a plaintive shrug.] Vous voyez ! C'est fini après tout !

standing some slight moral repairs, the seams of my coat are prematurely white, my character radically out at elbow. If you choose to continue my acquaintance, you will find me here; and if you'll be seen with me abroad, why, we'll walk down Fleet Street.

HORACE.

I share your devotion to this old city, Mr. Phenyl. London has given me the most fascinating companion.

DR. DELANEY.

London, sir! Why London contains the largest number of patients of any civilised city in the world.

MRS. GILFILLIAN.

And the best-hearted doctors in the world.

MINNIE.

It is always very full of Americans. [Putting her hand in HORACE's.] And some people like Americans.

WEDDERBURN.

Yes, yes, we'll speak well of London. For in this overgrown tangle some flowers find strength to raise their heads—the flowers of hope and atonement. [Taking RUTH's hand and holding it. To LAVENDER.] What do you think, my child?

LAVENDER.

I think, sir—[going towards CLEMENT]—whatever Clement thinks, always.

JOHN.

[*His eyes bolting.*] The—the—the ladies and gentlemen have gone, sir!

PHILIP.

Yes. I'm dining alone.

[*JOHN vanishes precipitately; whereupon PHILIP strides to the big doors, thrusts them wide open with a blow of his fists, and sits at the dining-table.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT

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